



## LITERARY ESSAYS



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# LITERARY ESSAYS

SELECTED AND EDITED BY  
H. G. RAWLINSON, M.A.  
INDIAN EDUCATIONAL SERVICE

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## PREFACE

THIS book is, frankly, an experiment. It is an attempt to introduce the reader to the beauties of the literary essay as handled by the great masters of our own, or nearly our own, times. Up to the present, copyright difficulties have stood in the way of issuing a representative volume of selections of this kind, and young students of literature have fallen into the habit of thinking that modern English prose is represented by Hazlitt and Lamb, Macaulay and Carlyle, if not by Johnson and Goldsmith! It is hoped that this compilation may serve to introduce them to fresh sources of interest and pleasure, and to induce them to extend their studies of the authors here represented. The editor has been particularly fortunate in securing from Messrs Chatto and Windus the right to include three beautiful and characteristic essays by Robert Louis Stevenson, a writer whose felicity of style makes him an admirable model. None of the essays here collected are extracts or portions of larger works, each is reprinted intact. And as far as the editor is aware, none have appeared in any previous book of selections. In choosing the essays to be included, an attempt has been made to cover as wide a field as possible. Thus, Arnold's essay deals

with literary, and Pater's with artistic criticism Myers' with Imperial Rome, and Green's with medieval Italy Froude writes of University life, while Stevenson is reflective and personal

A word about notes seems to be needful An effort has been made to reduce this evil to a minimum, and only such foreign and classical references as the student is not likely to understand unaided are explained On the other hand, an attempt has been made to supply the reader with the environment necessary in order fully to appreciate what he is studying, by a general introduction and a fairly detailed critical account of the author and subject-matter of each essay

H G RAWLINSON

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## INTRODUCTION

"THE word is late, though the thing is ancient," says Bacon of the essay, no doubt with his mind upon Theophrastus and Seneca, but the real father of the Essay is Bacon's earlier contemporary, Montaigne. Montaigne, whom Pater so fascinatingly depicts in *Gaston de La Tour*, gave to the essay its most characteristic feature, the personal note, the desire to take the reader into the author's confidence, which it has ever since retained. The frank confessions of Montaigne were very different from Bacon's own pregnant aphorisms. Bacon has none of the disarming candour of the great Frenchman, and he is too much of a statesman and too little of a man to be a great essayist in the stricter sense of the term. The other occasional writers of the earlier part of the seventeenth century diverged in a not dissimilar fashion from the type: the character sketches of Hall, Overbury and Earle, after the manner of Theophrastus, are cold and impersonal. The personal note does not re-appear until Cowley's engaging essay "Of Myself."

With the Restoration, literature entered upon a new phase. Dryden, the father of modern English prose, was the originator of a novel and important

departure, the critical essay. With the rise of the newsheet, another and even more striking form of literature appears in the periodic and social essay of Addison and Steele. The Social Essay, which arose out of the decay of the Comedy of Manners, bore very much the same relationship to it as the nineteenth century novel did to the Romantic Drama. It combined the personal note of Montaigne and La Bruyère with the social satire of Theophrastus and his imitators. The beauty of this type of essay lay in its exquisite lightness and studied negligence, and it was quite evident that in the ponderous hands of Johnson it was already doomed.

At the commencement of the nineteenth century, the Review superseded the periodical newsheet. In 1802, the *Edinburgh* was started by Francis Jeffrey. It was followed in 1809 by its Tory rival, the *Quarterly*. *Frazer's*, *Blackwood's* (connected inseparably with the name of "Christopher North,") and a host of others followed. The sub-title of the *Edinburgh*, the "Critical Journal," indicates the direction now taken by the Essay. It is no longer chiefly devoted to personal and social topics, instead of being, in the words of Dr Johnson, "an irregular, undigested piece," it becomes a finished dissertation, usually in the shape of a book-review, upon a literary or historical subject. Literary criticism, both in France and England, has to a great extent taken this form. The new theories of poetry introduced during the Romantic Revival were hotly discussed in the reviews of the day. Everyone remembers the *Quarterly's* onslaught on Keats, and Jeffrey's "This

will never do " to the *Excursion*. The publication, in 1825, of Macaulay's *Milton* in the *Edinburgh*, was the beginning of a fresh era for the essay. About the same time, Carlyle's contributions to the *Edinburgh*, *Fraser's*, and other journals, were important achievements, destined to bear notable fruit. Hazlitt had been writing for the *Edinburgh* since 1814, and his *Round Table*, essays on "Literature, Men and Manners," is a farrago, social, critical and personal. Leigh Hunt's *Men, Women and Books*, belongs to the same class. De Quincey, essentially a journalistic essayist, contributed largely to *Blackwood's*. Only Charles Lamb continued the purely personal, subjective note struck by Addison and Steele.

Such, briefly, were the predecessors of the modern essay. In the late nineteenth century, the most important work done by essayists has undoubtedly been in the direction of literary criticism, and of these critics, Matthew Arnold and Walter Pater are perhaps the most representative figures. Matthew Arnold's indebtedness to France (Renan in one direction and Sainte Beuve in the other) and to Goethe, whose "wide and luminous view" he passionately admired, is obvious. The greatest service which Arnold did to his countrymen was to administer, after the fashion of Socrates, an electric shock to mid-Victorian self-complacency. His classification, in *Culture and Anarchy*, of Englishmen as Barbarians and Philistines, his plea for "sweetness and light," his definition of poetry as a "criticism of life," his advocacy of the formation of an Academy on the French model to regularize English taste are all typical of the man.

(Matthew Arnold's own style has a charm and distinction of its own. It has all the ease and polish of first-rate conversation. Essentially Greek in its elaborate simplicity, its studied moderation and aloofness and air of detachment, it is tinged with a gentle irony and a grave humour which prevents it from ever becoming dull.)

Pater is in many respects the antithesis of Arnold, though the note of perplexity and doubt,

Wandering between two worlds, one dead,  
The other powerless to be born,

so characteristic of Arnold's poetry, is re-echoed in *Marius*. His influence in academic circles was equally profound, and his "Art for Art's sake" became as famous as Arnold's classic definition of poetry. Pater has little of Arnold's serenity and ethical earnestness. He is, in his own words, "a lover of strange souls." Exotic and often morbid in his choice of subjects, he seeks inspiration from the late and decadent classical period, the Renaissance, the bye-ways of the Romantic movement. As a stylist, he is in prose what Swinburne and Rossetti are in verse. His writing is brilliant and fastidious, pervaded with what Professor Saintsbury calls an "ornate literary quietism." Yet, in spite of its mannerisms, no one with a sense of the beautiful can read the famous description of *La Gioconda* unmoved, and nothing is more characteristic of the man than his conclusion to the essay on Leonardo—"we forget them in speculating how one who had been always so desirous of beauty, but desired it always in such precise and

definite forms, as hands or flowers or hair, looked forward now into the vague land, and experienced the last curiosity "

(It is only necessary to indicate here some other directions followed by the leading literary essayists of the latter part of the Victorian period F W H Myers, an essay by whom is included in this selection, was a critic of great promise, who, unfortunately as some think, abandoned literature for psychic research Of other purely literary essayists, to take a few names almost at random, perhaps the most striking are Symonds, Hutton, Bagehot, Oscar Wilde, Dean Church, Leslie Stephen and Lord Morley Of the historical essayists, J A Froude was a tireless contributor to the magazines His *Short Studies of Great Subjects* continued the propaganda of Carlyle and Kingsley against Catholicism and Liberalism, in favour of the strong man and Elizabethan ideals in general His robust, picturesque and vigorous English comes as somewhat of a relief after the phrasing of Pater and the stylists His *Last Words about Oxford* is a graceful palinode to the *Alma Mater*, which made up by a tardy reparation for the ill-treatment heaped upon Froude in his youth Froude is our most characteristic historical essayist, though many other historians supplemented their larger works with briefer studies of this nature Froude's opponent, Freeman, was an indefatigable essayist, as was J R Green, who contributed most of his work to the *Saturday Review* Green's writing suffered from haste and over-production, but it is singularly picturesque and vivid, and he has the gift of throwing himself

into the past and making it live. It is impossible to do more than mention the scientific essay, usually the written production of a lecture, which attained considerable eminence under the versatile hands of Huxley and Tyndall.

We have purposely left Stevenson to the last. In him the essay returns to the personal note struck by Montaigne and re-echoed by Lamb. All that Stevenson writes is subjective, a record of his own thoughts, struggles and experiences. His charming simplicity covers a vast amount of labour, and few writers have achieved the limpid clearness of expression which characterises every line which he wrote. Of no one can it be more justly said that "the style is the man." His writing is the expression of the rare and noble spirit that inspires it, and its unfailing buoyancy and sparkling wit re-echo the author's heroic struggle against failure and disease which only ended with his death. How Stevenson formed his style, he tells us himself. "Whenever I read a book or a passage that particularly pleased me," he says in *Memories and Portraits*, "in which there was either some conspicuous force or some happy distinction in the style, I must sit down at once and set myself to ape that quality." I have thus played the sedulous ape to Hazlitt, to Lamb, to Wordsworth, to Sir Thomas Browne, to Defoe, to Hawthorne, to Montaigne, to Baudelaire and to Obermann. (Nothing of Stevenson's is commonplace or conventional.) He passed no slovenly work, though at times, when invention failed or the atmosphere was uncongenial, his romances became formless and lacking precision.

oi touch (From contemporary France he has borrowed deeply, but his own essential healthiness of mind saves him from the morbidity of Baudelaire. Perhaps his chief characteristic is his radiant humour, to which ill-health and poverty only lent a touch of wistful, whimsical pathos. Few who have read can ever forget the haunting melody of the closing lines of *El Dorado*, "O toiling hands of mortals! O unwearied feet, travelling ye know not whither! Soon, soon, it seems to you, you must come forth on some conspicuous hill-top, and but a little way further, against the setting sun, descry the spires of El Dorado. Little do ye know your own blessedness; for to travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive, and the true success is to labour." In *A Christmas Sermon*—perhaps the most characteristic of all his writings—he pens his own epitaph, "Here lies one who meant well, tried a little, failed much," and he looks forward to the time when "out of the glorious, sun-coloured earth, out of the day and the dust and the ecstasy—there goes another Faithful Failure!" No one could have written that, except Stevenson.





## WORDSWORTH<sup>1</sup>

I REMEMBER hearing Lord Macaulay say, after Wordsworth's death, when subscriptions were being collected to found a memorial of him, that ten years earlier more money could have been raised in Cambridge alone, to do honour to Wordsworth, than was now raised all through the country. Lord Macaulay had, as we know, his own heightened and telling way of putting things, and we must always make allowance for it. But probably it is true that Wordsworth has never, either before or since, been so accepted and popular, so established in possession of the minds of all who profess to care for poetry, as he was between the years 1830 and 1840, and at Cambridge. From the very first, no doubt, he had his believers and witnesses. But I have myself heard him declare that, for he knew not how many years, his poetry had never brought him in enough to buy his shoe-strings. The poetry-reading public was very slow to recognise him, and was very easily drawn away from him. Scott effaced him with this public, Byron effaced him. The death of Byron seemed, however, to make an opening for Wordsworth. Scott, who had for some

<sup>1</sup> The preface to *The Poems of Wordsworth*, chosen and edited by Matthew Arnold, 1879.

time ceased to produce poetry himself, and stood before the public as a great novelist, Scott, too genuine himself not to feel the profound genuineness of Wordsworth, and with an instinctive recognition of his firm hold on nature and of his local truth, always admired him sincerely, and praised him generously. The influence of Coleridge upon young men of ability was then powerful, and was still gathering strength, this influence told entirely in favour of Wordsworth's poetry. Cambridge was a place where Coleridge's influence had great action, and where Wordsworth's poetry, therefore, flourished especially. But even amongst the general public its sale grew large, the eminence of its author was widely recognised, and Rydal Mount became an object of pilgrimage. I remember Wordsworth relating how one of the pilgrims, a clergyman, asked him if he had ever written anything besides the *Guide to the Lakes*. Yes, he answered modestly, he had written verses. Not every pilgrim was a reader, but the vogue was established, and the stream of pilgrims came.

Mr Tennyson's decisive appearance dates from 1842. One cannot say that he effaced Wordsworth as Scott and Byron had effaced him. The poetry of Wordsworth had been so long before the public, the suffrage of good judges was so steady and so strong in its favour, that by 1842 the verdict of posterity, one may almost say, had been already pronounced, and Wordsworth's English fame was secure. But the vogue, the ear and applause of the great body of poetry-readers, never quite thoroughly

perhaps his, he gradually lost more and more, and Mr Tennyson gained them. Mr Tennyson drew to himself, and away from Wordsworth, the poetry-reading public, and the new generations. Even in 1850, when Wordsworth died, this diminution of popularity was visible, and occasioned the remark of Lord Macaulay which I quoted at starting.

The diminution has continued. The influence of Coleridge has waned, and Wordsworth's poetry can no longer draw succour from this ally. The poetry has not, however, wanted eulogists, and it may be said to have brought its eulogists luck, for almost every one who has praised Wordsworth's poetry has praised it well. But the public has remained cold, or, at least, undetermined. Even the abundance of Mr Palgrave's fine and skilfully chosen specimens of Wordsworth, in the *Golden Treasury*, surprised many readers, and gave offence to not a few. To tenth-rate critics and compilers, for whom any violent shock to the public taste would be a temerity not to be risked, it is still quite permissible to speak of Wordsworth's poetry, not only with ignorance, but with impertinence. On the Continent he is almost unknown.

I cannot think, then, that Wordsworth has, up to this time, at all obtained his deserts. "Glory," said M. Renan the other day, "glory after all is the thing which has the best chance of not being altogether vanity." Wordsworth was a homely man, and himself would certainly never have thought of talking of glory as that which, after all, has the best chance of not being altogether vanity. Yet we may well

allow that few things are less vain than *real* glory. Let us conceive of the whole group of civilised nations as being, for intellectual and spiritual purposes, one great confederation, bound to a joint action and working towards a common result, a confederation whose members have a due knowledge both of the past, out of which they all proceed, and of one another. This was the ideal of Goethe, and it is an ideal which will impose itself upon the thoughts of our modern societies more and more. Then to be recognised by the verdict of such a confederation as a master, or even as a seriously and eminently worthy workman, in one's own line of intellectual or spiritual activity, is indeed glory, a glory which it would be difficult to rate too highly. For what could be more beneficent, more salutary? The world is forwarded by having its attention fixed on the best things, and here is a tribunal, free from all suspicion of national and provincial partiality, putting a stamp on the best things, and recommending them for general honour and acceptance. A nation, again, is furthered by recognition of its real gifts and successes, it is encouraged to develop them further. And here is an honest verdict, telling us which of our supposed successes are really, in the judgment of the great impartial world, and not in our own private judgment only, successes, and which are not.

It is so easy to feel pride and satisfaction in one's own things, so hard to make sure that one is right in feeling it! We have a great empire. But so had Nebuchadnezzar. We extol the "unrivalled happiness" of our national civilisation. But then comes a candid

friend, and remarks that our upper class is materialised, our middle class vulgarised, and our lower class brutalised. We are proud of our painting, our music. But we find that in the judgment of other people our painting is questionable, and our music non-existent. We are proud of our men of science. And here it turns out that the world is with us, we find that in the judgment of other people, too, Newton among the dead, and Mr Darwin among the living, hold as high a place as they hold in our national opinion.

Finally, we are proud of our poets and poetry. Now poetry is nothing less than the most perfect speech of man, that in which he comes nearest to being able to utter the truth. It is no small thing, therefore, to succeed eminently in poetry. And so much is required for duly estimating success here, that about poetry it is perhaps hardest to arrive at a sure general verdict, and takes longest. Meanwhile, our own conviction of the superiority of our national poets is not decisive, is almost certain to be mingled, as we see constantly in English eulogy of Shakespeare, with much of provincial infatuation. And we know what was the opinion current amongst our neighbours the French—people of taste, acuteness, and quick literary tact—not a hundred years ago, about our great poets. The old *Biographie Universelle* notices the pretension of the English to a place for their poets among the chief poets of the world, and says that this is a pretension which to no one but an Englishman can ever seem admissible. And the scornful, disparaging things said by foreigners about Shakespeare and Milton and about our national

over-estimate of them, have been often quoted, and will be in every one's remembrance

A great change has taken place, and Shakespeare is now generally recognised, even in France, as one of the greatest of poets. Yes, some anti-Gallican cynic will say, the French rank him with Corneille and with Victor Hugo ! But let me have the pleasure of quoting a sentence about Shakespeare, which I met with by accident not long ago in the *Correspondant*, a French review which not a dozen English people, I suppose, look at. The writer is praising Shakespeare's prose. With Shakespeare, he says, "prose comes in whenever the subject, being more familiar, is unsuited to the majestic English iambic." And he goes on "Shakespeare is the king of poetic rhythm and style, as well as the king of the realm of thought, along with his dazzling prose, Shakespeare has succeeded in giving us the most varied, the most harmonious verse which has ever sounded upon the human ear since the verse of the Greeks." M. Henry Cochin, the writer of this sentence, deserves our gratitude for it, it would not be easy to praise Shakespeare, in a single sentence, more justly. And when a foreigner and a Frenchman writes thus of Shakespeare, and when Goethe says of Milton, in whom there was so much to repel Goethe rather than to attract him, that "nothing has been ever done so entirely in the sense of the Greeks as *Samson Agonistes*," and that "Milton is in very truth a poet whom we must treat with all reverence," then we understand what constitutes a European recognition of poets and poetry as contradistinguished from a merely

national recognition, and that in favour both of Milton and of Shakespeare the judgment of the high court of appeal has finally gone

I come back to M Renan's praise of glory, from which I started Yes, real glory is a most serious thing, glory authenticated by the Amphictyonic Court of final appeal, definitive glory And even for poets and poetry, long and difficult as may be the process of arriving at the right award, the right award comes at last, the definitive glory rests where it is deserved Every establishment of such a real glory is good and wholesome for mankind at large, good and wholesome for the nation which produced the poet crowned with it To the poet himself it can seldom do harm, for he, poor man, is in his grave, probably, long before his glory crowns him

Wordsworth has been in his grave for some thirty years, and certainly his lovers and admirers cannot flatter themselves that this great and steady light of glory as yet shines over him He is not fully recognised at home; he is not recognised at all abroad Yet I firmly believe that the poetical performance of Wordsworth is, after that of Shakespeare and Milton, of which all the world now recognises the worth, undoubtedly the most considerable in our language from the Elizabethan age to the present time Chaucer is anterior, and on other grounds, too, he cannot well be brought into the comparison But taking the roll of our chief poetical names, besides Shakespeare and Milton, from the age of Elizabeth downwards, and going through it,—Spenser, Dryden, Pope, Gray, Goldsmith, Cowper, Burns,



Coleridge, Scott, Campbell, Moore, Byron, Shelley, Keats (I mention those only who are dead),—I think it certain that Wordsworth's name deserves to stand, and will finally stand, above them all. Several of the poets named have gifts and excellences which Wordsworth has not. But taking the performance of each as a whole, I say that Wordsworth seems to me to have left a body of poetical work superior in power, in interest, in the qualities which give enduring freshness, to that which any one of the others has left.

But this is not enough to say. I think it certain, further, that if we take the chief poetical names of the Continent since the death of Molière, and, omitting Goethe, confront the remaining names with that of Wordsworth, the result is the same. Let us take Klopstock, Lessing, Schiller, Uhland, Ruckert, and Heine for Germany, Filicaja, Alfieri, Manzoni, and Leopardi for Italy, Racine, Boileau, Voltaire, André Chenier, Béranger, Lamartine, Musset, M. Victor Hugo (he has been so long celebrated that although he still lives I may be permitted to name him) for France. Several of these, again, have evidently gifts and excellences to which Wordsworth can make no pretension. But in real poetical achievement it seems to me indubitable that to Wordsworth, here again, belongs the palm. It seems to me that Wordsworth has left behind him a body of poetical work which wears, and will wear, better on the whole than the performance of any one of these personages, so far more brilliant and celebrated, most of them, than the homely poet of Rydal. Wordsworth's perform-

ance in poetry is on the whole, in power, in interest, in the qualities which give enduring freshness, superior to theirs

This is a high claim to make for Wordsworth. But if it is a just claim, if Wordsworth's place among the poets who have appeared in the last two or three centuries is after Shakespeare, Molière, Milton, Goethe, indeed, but before all the rest, then in time Wordsworth will have his due. We shall recognise him in his place, as we recognise Shakespeare and Milton; and not only we ourselves shall recognise him, but he will be recognised by Europe also. Meanwhile, those who recognise him already may do well, perhaps, to ask themselves whether there are not in the case of Wordsworth certain special obstacles which hinder or delay his due recognition by others, and whether these obstacles are not in some measure removable.

The *Excursion* and the *Prelude*, his poems of greatest bulk, are by no means Wordsworth's best work. His best work is in his shorter pieces, and many indeed are there of these which are of first-rate excellence. But in his seven volumes, the pieces of high merit are mingled with a mass of pieces very inferior to them, so inferior to them that it seems wonderful how the same poet should have produced both. Shakespeare frequently has lines and passages in a strain quite false, and which are entirely unworthy of him. But <sup>it is not</sup> one can imagine his smiling if one could meet him in the Elysian Fields and tell him so, smiling and replying that he knew it perfectly well himself, and what did it matter? But with Wordsworth the case is different. Work altogether inferior, work

quite uninspired, flat and dull, is produced by him with evident unconsciousness of its defects, and he presents it to us with the same faith and seriousness as his best work. Now a drama or an epic fill the mind, and one does not look beyond them, but in a collection of short pieces the impression made by one piece requires to be continued and sustained by the piece following. In reading Wordsworth, the impression made by one of his fine pieces is too often dulled and spoiled by a very inferior piece coming after it.

Wordsworth composed verses during a space of some sixty years; and it is no exaggeration to say that within one single decade of those years, between 1798 and 1808, almost all his really first-rate work was produced. A mass of inferior work remains, work done before and after this golden prime, imbedding the first-rate work and clogging it, obstructing our approach to it, chilling, not unfrequently, the high-wrought mood with which we leave it. To be recognised far and wide as a great poet, to be possible and receivable as a classic, Wordsworth needs to be relieved of a great deal of the poetical baggage which now encumbers him. To administer this relief is indispensable, unless he is to continue to be a poet for the few only,—a poet valued far below his real worth by the world.

There is another thing Wordsworth classified his poems not according to any commonly received plan of arrangement, but according to a scheme of mental physiology. He has poems of the fancy, poems of the imagination, poems of sentiment and

reflection, and so on His categories are ingenious but far-fetched, and the result of his employment of them is unsatisfactory Poems are separated one from another which possess a kinship of subject or of treatment far more vital and deep than the supposed unity of mental origin, which was Wordsworth's reason for joining them with others

The tact of the Greeks in matters of this kind was infallible We may rely upon it that we shall not improve upon the classification adopted by the Greeks for kinds of poetry, that their categories of epic, dramatic, lyric, and so forth, have a natural propriety, and should be adhered to It may sometimes seem doubtful to which of two categories a poem belongs, whether this or that poem is to be called, for instance, narrative or lyric, lyric or elegiac But there is to be found in every good poem a strain, a predominant note, which determines the poem as belonging to one of these kinds rather than the other; and here is the best proof of the value of the classification, and of the advantage of adhering to it Wordsworth's poems will never produce their due effect until they are freed from their present artificial arrangement, and grouped more naturally.

Disengaged from the quantity of inferior work which now obscures them, the best poems of Wordsworth, I hear many people say, would indeed stand out in great beauty, but they would prove to be very few in number, scarcely more than half a dozen I maintain, on the other hand, that what strikes me with admiration, what establishes in my opinion Wordsworth's superiority, is the great and ample

body of powerful work which remains to him, even after all his inferior work has been cleared away. He gives us so much to rest upon, so much which communicates his spirit and engages ours !

This is of very great importance. If it were a comparison of single pieces, or of three or four pieces, by each poet, I do not say that Wordsworth would stand decisively above Gray, or Burns, or Coleridge, or Keats, or Manzoni, or Heine. It is in his ampler body of powerful work that I find his superiority. His good work itself, his work which counts, is not all of it, of course, of equal value. Some kinds of poetry are in themselves lower kinds than others. The ballad kind is a lower kind, the didactic kind, still more, is a lower kind. Poetry of this latter sort counts, too, sometimes, by its biographical interest partly, not by its poetical interest pure and simple, but then this can only be when the poet producing it has the power and importance of Wordsworth, a power and importance which he assuredly did not establish by such didactic poetry alone. Altogether, it is, I say, by the great body of powerful and significant work which remains to him, after every reduction and deduction has been made, that Wordsworth's superiority is proved.

To exhibit this body of Wordsworth's best work, to clear away obstructions from around it, and to let it speak for itself, is what every lover of Wordsworth should desire. Until this has been done, Wordsworth, whom we, to whom he is dear, all of us know and feel to be so great a poet, has not had a fair chance before the world. When once it has

been done, he will make his way best, not by our advocacy of him, but by his own worth and power. We may safely leave him to make his way thus, we who believe that a superior worth and power in poetry finds in mankind a sense responsive to it and disposed at last to recognise it. Yet at the outset, before he has been duly known and recognised, we may do Wordsworth a service, perhaps, by indicating in what his superior power and worth will be found to consist, and in what it will not.

Long ago, in speaking of Homer, I said that the noble and profound application of ideas to life is the most essential part of poetic greatness. I said that a great poet receives his distinctive character of superiority from his application, under the conditions immutably fixed by the laws of poetic beauty and poetic truth, from his application, I say, to his subject, whatever it may be, of the ideas

“On man, on nature, and on human life,”

which he has acquired for himself. The line quoted is Wordsworth's own, and his superiority arises from his powerful use, in his best pieces, his powerful application to his subject, of ideas “on man, on nature, and on human life.”

Voltaire, with his signal acuteness, most truly remarked that “no nation has treated in poetry moral ideas with more energy and depth than the English nation.” And he adds “There, it seems to me, is the great merit of the English poets.” Voltaire does not mean, by “treating in poetry moral ideas,” the composing moral and didactic poems,—

that brings us but a very little way in poetry. He means just the same thing as was meant when I spoke above "of the noble and profound application of ideas to life," and he means the application of these ideas under the conditions fixed for us by the laws of poetic beauty and poetic truth. If it is said that to call these ideas *moral* ideas is to introduce a strong and injurious limitation, I answer that it is to do nothing of the kind, because moral ideas are really so main a part of human life. The question, *how to live*, is itself a moral idea, and it is the question which most interests every man, and with which, in some way or other, he is perpetually occupied. A large sense is of course to be given to the term *moral*. Whatever bears upon the question, "how to live," comes under it.

"Nor love thy life, nor hate, but, what thou liv'st,  
Live well, how long or short, permit to heaven."

In those fine lines Milton utters, as every one at once perceives, a moral idea. Yes, but so too, when Keats consoles the forward-bending lover on the Grecian Urn, the lover arrested and presented in immortal relief by the sculptor's hand before he can kiss, with the line,

"For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair"—

he utters a moral idea. When Shakespeare says, that

"We are such stuff  
As dreams are made of, and our little life  
Is rounded with a sleep,"

he utters a moral idea.

Voltaire was right in thinking that the energetic and profound treatment of moral ideas, in this large sense, is what distinguishes the English poetry. He sincerely meant praise, not dispraise or hint of limitation, and they err who suppose that poetic limitation is a necessary consequence of the fact, the fact being granted as Voltaire states it. If what distinguishes the greatest poets is their powerful and profound application of ideas to life, which surely no good critic will deny, then to prefix to the term ideas here the term moral makes hardly any difference, because human life itself is in so preponderating a degree moral.

It is important, therefore, to hold fast to this, that poetry is at bottom a criticism of life, that the greatness of a poet lies in his powerful and beautiful application of ideas to life,—to the question How to live. Morals are often treated in a narrow and false fashion, they are bound up with systems of thought and belief which have had their day, they are fallen into the hands of pedants and professional dealers, they grow tiresome to some of us. We find attraction, at times, even in a poetry of revolt against them, in a poetry which might take for its motto Omar Kheyam's words "Let us make up in the tavern for the time which we have wasted in the mosque." Or we find attractions in a poetry indifferent to them, in a poetry where the contents may be what they will, but where the form is studied and exquisite. We delude ourselves in either case, and the best cure for our delusion is to let our minds rest upon that great and inexhaustible word *life*, until we learn to enter into its meaning. A poetry of revolt against



moral ideas is a poetry of revolt against *life*, a poetry of indifference towards moral ideas is a poetry of indifference towards *life*

Epictetus had a happy figure for things like the play of the senses, or literary form and finish, or argumentative ingenuity, in comparison with "the best and master thing" for us, as he called it, the concern, how to live. Some people were afraid of them, he said, or they disliked and undervalued them. Such people were wrong, they were unthankful or cowardly. But the things might also be over-prized, and treated as final when they are not. They bear to life the relation which inns bear to home. "As if a man, journeying home, and finding a nice inn on the road, and liking it, were to stay for ever at the inn! Man, thou hast forgotten thine object, thy journey was not *to* this, but *through* this. 'But this inn is taking.' And how many other inns, too, are taking, and how many fields and meadows! but as places of passage merely. You have an object, which is this to get home, to do your duty to your family, friends, and fellow-countrymen, to attain inward freedom, serenity, happiness, contentment. Style takes your fancy, arguing takes your fancy, and you forget your home and want to make your abode with them and to stay with them, on the plea that they are taking. Who denies that they are taking? but as places of passage, as inns. And when I say this, you suppose me to be attacking the care for style, the care for argument. I am not, I attack the resting in them, the not looking to the end which is beyond them."

Now, when we come across a poet like Théophile Gautier, we have a poet who has taken up his abode at an inn, and never got farther. There may be inducements to this or that one of us, at this or that moment, to find delight in him, to cleave to him, but after all, we do not change the truth about him,—we only stay ourselves in his inn along with him. And when we come across a poet like Wordsworth, who sings

“Of truth, of grandeur, beauty, love and hope,  
And melancholy fear subdued by faith,  
Of blessed consolations in distress;  
Of moral strength and intellectual power,  
Of joy in widest commonalty spread”—

then we have a poet intent on “the best and master thing,” and who prosecutes his journey home. We say, for brevity’s sake, that he deals with *life*, because he deals with that in which life really consists. This is what Voltaire means to praise in the English poets,—this dealing with what is really life. But always it is the mark of the greatest poets that they deal with it, and to say that the English poets are remarkable for dealing with it, is only another way of saying, what is true, that in poetry the English genius has especially shown its power.

Wordsworth deals with it, and his greatness lies in his dealing with it so powerfully. I have named a number of celebrated poets above all of whom he, in my opinion, deserves to be placed. He is to be placed above poets like Voltaire, Dryden, Pope, Lessing, Schiller, because these famous personages,

with a thousand gifts and merits, never, or scarcely ever, attain the distinctive accent and utterance of the high and genuine poets—

“*Quique pii vates et Phœbo digna locuti,*”

at all Burns, Keats, Heine, not to speak of others in our list, have this accent,—who can doubt it? And at the same time they have treasures of humour, felicity, passion, for which in Wordsworth we shall look in vain. Where, then, is Wordsworth’s superiority? It is here, he deals with more of *life* than they do, he deals with *life*, as a whole, more powerfully.

No Wordsworthian will doubt this. Nay, the fervent Wordsworthian will add, as Mr Leslie Stephen does, that Wordsworth’s poetry is precious because his philosophy is sound, that his “ethical system is as distinctive and capable of exposition as Bishop Butler’s”, that his poetry is informed by ideas which “fall spontaneously into a scientific system of thought”. But we must be on our guard against the Wordsworthians, if we want to secure for Wordsworth his due rank as a poet. The Wordsworthians are apt to praise him for the wrong things, and to lay far too much stress upon what they call his philosophy. His poetry is the reality, his philosophy,—so far, at least, as it may put on the form and habit of “a scientific system of thought,” and the more that it puts them on,—is the illusion. Perhaps we shall one day learn to make this proposition general, and to say Poetry is the reality, philosophy the illusion. But in Wordsworth’s case, at any rate,

we cannot do him justice until we dismiss his formal philosophy.

The *Excursion* abounds with philosophy, and therefore the *Excursion* is to the Wordsworthian what it never can be to the disinterested lover of poetry,—a satisfactory work. "Duty exists," says Wordsworth, in the *Excursion*, and then he proceeds thus—

" . . . Immutably survive,  
For our support, the measures and the forms,  
Which an abstract Intelligence supplies,  
Whose kingdom is, where time and space are not."

And the Wordsworthian is delighted, and thinks that here is a sweet union of philosophy and poetry. But the disinterested lover of poetry will feel that the lines carry us really not a step farther than the proposition which they would interpret; that they are a tissue of elevated but abstract verbiage, alien to the very nature of poetry.

Or let us come direct to the centre of Wordsworth's philosophy, as "an ethical system, as distinctive and capable of systematical exposition as Bishop Butler's"—

" . . . One adequate support  
For the calamities of mortal life  
Exists, one only,—an assured belief  
That the procession of our fate, how'er  
Sad or disturbed, is ordered by a Being  
Of infinite benevolence and power,  
Whose everlasting purposes embrace  
All accidents, converting them to good "

That is doctrine such as we hear in church too, religious and philosophic doctrine, and the attached Wordsworthian loves passages of such doctrine, and brings them forward in proof of his poet's excellence. But however true the doctrine may be, it has, as here presented, none of the characters of *poetic* truth, the kind of truth which we require from a poet, and in which Wordsworth is really strong.

Even the "intimations" of the famous Ode, those corner-stones of the supposed philosophic system of Wordsworth,—the idea of the high instincts and affections coming out in childhood, testifying of a divine home recently left, and fading away as our life proceeds,—this idea, of undeniable beauty as a play of fancy, has itself not the character of poetic truth of the best kind, it has no real solidity. The instinct of delight in Nature and her beauty had no doubt extraordinary strength in Wordsworth himself as a child. But to say that universally this instinct is mighty in childhood, and tends to die away afterwards, is to say what is extremely doubtful. In many people, perhaps with the majority of educated persons, the love of Nature is nearly imperceptible at ten years old, but strong and operative at thirty. In general we may say of these high instincts of early childhood, the base of the alleged systematic philosophy of Wordsworth, what Thucydides says of the early achievements of the Greek race. "It is impossible to speak with certainty of what is so remote, but from all that we can really investigate, I should say that they were no very great things."

Finally, the "scientific system of thought" in

Wordsworth gives us at last such poetry as this, which the devout Wordsworthian <sup>will</sup> accept—

“ O for the coming of that glorious time  
 When, prizing knowledge as her noblest wealth,  
 And best protection, <sup>this</sup> Imperial Realm, <sup>shall</sup>  
 While she <sup>demands</sup> exacts allegiance, shall admit  
 An obligation, on her part, to *teach*  
 Them who are born to serve her and obey,  
 Binding herself by statute to *secure*,  
 For all the children whom her soil maintains,  
 The rudiments of letters, and inform  
 The mind with moral and religious truth ”

Wordsworth calls Voltaire dull, and surely the production of these un-Voltairian lines must have been imposed on him as a judgment! One can hear them being quoted at a Social Science Congress, one can call up the whole scene. A great room in one of our <sup>large</sup> dismal provincial towns, dusty air and jaded afternoon daylight, benches full of men with bald heads and women in spectacles, an orator lifting up his face from a manuscript written within, and without to declaim these lines of Wordsworth, and in the soul of any poor child of nature who may have wandered in thither, an unutterable sense of lamentation, and mourning, and woe!

“ But turn we,” as Wordsworth says, “ from these bold, bad men,” the haunters of Social Science Congresses. And let us be on our guard, too, against the exhibitors and extollers of a “ scientific system of thought ” in Wordsworth’s poetry. The poetry will never be seen aright while they thus exhibit it. The cause of its greatness is simple, and may be told.

quite simply ( Wordsworth's poetry is great because of the extraordinary power with which Wordsworth feels the joy offered to us in nature, the joy offered to us in the simple primary affections and duties, and because of the extraordinary power with which, in case after case, he shows us this joy, and renders it so as to make us share it )

The source of joy from which he thus draws is the truest and most unfailing source of joy accessible to man. It is also accessible universally. Wordsworth brings us word, therefore, according to his own strong and characteristic line, he brings us word

" Of joy in widest commonalty spread "

Here is an immense advantage for a poet. Wordsworth tells us what all seek, and tells of it at its truest and best source, and yet a source where all may go and draw for it.

Nevertheless, we are not to suppose that everything is precious which Wordsworth, standing even at this perennial and beautiful source, may give us. Wordsworthians are apt to talk as if it must be. They will speak with the same reverence of *The Sailor's Mother*, for example, as of *Lucy Gray*. They do their master harm by such lack of discrimination. *Lucy Gray* is a beautiful success, *The Sailor's Mother* is a failure. To give aright what he wishes to give, to interpret and render successfully, is not always within Wordsworth's own command. It is within no poet's command, here is the part of the Muse, the inspiration, the God, the "not ourselves". In Wordsworth's case the accident for so it may almost be called,

of inspiration, is of peculiar importance. No poet, perhaps, is so evidently filled with a new and sacred energy when the inspiration is upon him, no poet, when it fails him, is so left, "weak as is a breaking wave." I remember hearing him say that "Goethe's poetry was not inevitable enough." The remark is striking and true, no line in Goethe, as Goethe said himself, but its maker knew well how it came there. Wordsworth is right, Goethe's poetry is not inevitable, not inevitable enough. But Wordsworth's poetry, when he is at his best, is inevitable, as inevitable as Nature herself. It might seem that Nature not only gave him the matter for his poem, but wrote his poem for him. He has no style. He was too conversant with Milton not to catch at times his master's manner, and he has fine Miltonic lines, but he has no assured poetic style of his own, like Milton. When he seeks to have a style he falls into ponderosity and pomposity. In the *Excursion* we have his style, as an artistic product of his own creation, and although Jeffrey completely failed to recognise Wordsworth's real greatness, he was yet not wrong in saying of the *Excursion*, as a work of poetic style "This will never do." And yet magical as is that power, which Wordsworth has not, of assured and possessed poetic style, he has something which is an equivalent for it.

Every one who has any sense for these things feels the subtle turn, the heightening, which is given to a poet's verse by his genius for style. We can feel it in the

"After life's fitful fever, he sleeps well"—



of Shakespeare , in the

“            though fall’n on evil days,

On evil days though fall’n, and evil tongues ”—

of Milton    It is the incomparable charm of Milton’s power of poetic style which gives such worth to *Paradise Regained*, and makes a great poem of a work in which Milton’s imagination does not soar high. Wordsworth has in constant possession, and at command, no style of this kind , but he had too poetic a nature, and had read the great poets too well, not to catch, as I have already remarked, something of it occasionally. We find it not only in his Miltonic lines , we find it in such a phrase as this, where the manner is his own, not Milton’s—

“            . the fierce confederate storm

Of sorrow barricadoed evermore

Within the walls of cities , ”

although even here, perhaps, the power of style, which is undeniable, is more properly that of eloquent prose than the subtle heightening and change wrought by genuine poetic style. It is style, again, and the elevation given by style, which chiefly makes the effectiveness of *Laodameia*. Still the right sort of verse to choose from Wordsworth, if we are to seize his true and most characteristic form of expression, is a line like this from *Michael*—

“ And never lifted up a single stone ”

There is nothing subtle in it, no heightening, no study of poetic style, strictly so called, at all , yet it is expression of the highest and most truly expressive kind

Wordsworth owed much to Burns, and a style of perfect plainness, relying for effect solely on the weight and force of that which with entire fidelity it utters, Burns could show him

“ The poor inhabitant below  
 Was quick to learn and wise to know,  
 And keenly felt the friendly glow  
 And softer flame ,  
 But thoughtless follies laid him low  
 And stain'd his name ”

Every one will be conscious of a likeness here to Wordsworth , and if Wordsworth did great things with this nobly plain manner, we must remember, what indeed he himself would always have been forward to acknowledge, that Burns used it before him

Still Wordsworth's use of it has something unique and unmatchable Nature herself seems, I say, to take the pen out of his hand, and to write for him with her own bare, sheer, penetrating power This arises from two causes , from the profound sincerity with which Wordsworth feels his subject, and also from the profoundly sincere and natural character of his subject itself He can and will treat such a subject with nothing but the most plain, first-hand, almost austere naturalness His expression may often be called bald, as, for instance, in the poem of *Resolution and Independence* , but it is bald as the bare mountain tops are bald, with a baldness which is full of grandeur

Wherever we meet with the successful balance, in Wordsworth, of profound truth of subject with

profound truth of execution, he is unique His best poems are those which most perfectly exhibit this balance I have a warm admiration for *Laodameia* and for the great *Ode*, but if I am to tell the very truth, I find *Laodameia* not wholly free from something artificial, and the great *Ode* not wholly free from something declamatory If I had to pick out poems of a kind most perfectly to show Wordsworth's unique power, I should rather choose poems such as *Michael*, *The Fountain*, *The Highland Reaper* And poems with the peculiar and unique beauty which distinguishes these, Wordsworth produced in considerable number, besides very many other poems of which the worth, although not so rare as the worth of these, is still exceedingly high

On the whole, then, as I said at the beginning, not only is Wordsworth eminent by reason of the goodness of his best work, but he is eminent also by reason of the great body of good work which he has left to us With the ancients I will not compare him In many respects the ancients are far above us, and yet there is something that we demand which they can never give Leaving the ancients, let us come to the poets and poetry of Christendom Dante, Shakespeare, Molière, Milton, Goethe, are altogether larger and more splendid luminaries in the poetical heaven than Wordsworth But I know not where else, among the moderns, we are to find his superiors

To disengage the poems which show his power, and to present them to the English-speaking public and to the world, is the object of this volume I by no means say that it contains all which in Words

worth's poems is interesting Except in the case of *Margaret*, a story composed separately from the rest of the *Excursion*, and which belongs to a different part of England, I have not ventured on detaching portions of poems, or on giving any piece otherwise than as Wordsworth himself gave it But under the conditions imposed by this reserve, the volume contains, I think, everything, or nearly everything, which may best serve him with the majority of lovers of poetry, nothing which may disserve him

I have spoken lightly of Wordsworthians, and if we are to get Wordsworth recognised by the public and by the world, we must recommend him not in the spirit of a clique, but in the spirit of disinterested lovers of poetry But I am a Wordsworthian myself I can read with pleasure and edification *Peter Bell*, and the whole series of *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*, and the address to Mr Wilkinson's spade, and even the *Thanksgiving Ode*,—everything of Wordsworth, I think, except *Vaudracow and Julia* It is not for nothing that one has been brought up in the veneration of a man so truly worthy of homage, that one has seen him and heard him, lived in his neighbourhood, and been familiar with his country No Wordsworthian has a tenderer affection for this pure and sage master than I, or is less really offended by his defects But Wordsworth is something more than the pure and sage master of a small band of devoted followers, and we ought not to rest satisfied until he is seen to be what he is. He is one of the very chief glories of English Poetry, and by nothing is England so glorious as by her poetry Let us

lay aside every weight which hinders our getting him recognised as this, and let our one study be to bring to pass, as widely as possible and as truly as possible, his own word concerning his poems "They will co-operate with the benign tendencies in human nature and society, and will, in their degree, be efficacious in making men wiser, better, and happier"

## MARCUS AURELIUS ANTONINUS

Αγού δέ μ', ὦ Ζεῦ, καὶ συγ' ἡ Περρωμένη,  
ὅποι ποθ' ὑμῖν εἰμι διατεταγμένος  
ὥς ἔσομαι γ' ἄοκνος ἢν δὲ μὴ θέλω,  
κακὸς γενόμενος οὐδὲν ἤττον ἔσομαι

CLEANTHES

SOME apology may seem to be due from one who ventures to treat once again of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus. Few characters in history have been oftener or more ably discussed during the present age, an age whose high aims and uncertain creed have found at once impulse and sympathy in the meditations of the crowned philosopher. And, finally, the most subtle and attractive of living historians has closed his strange portrait-gallery with this majestic figure, accounting that the sun of Christianity was not fully risen till it had seen the paling of the old world's last and purest star.

The subject has lost, no doubt, its literary freshness, but its moral and philosophical significance is still unexhausted. Even an increased interest, indeed, may be felt at the present time in considering the relations which the philosophy of Marcus bears either to ancient or to modern religious thought. For he has been made, as it were, the saint and exemplar of Agnosticism, the type of all such virtue and wisdom

as modern criticism can allow to be sound or permanent. It will be the object of the following essay to suggest some reflections on the position thus assigned to him, dwelling only incidentally, and as briefly as may be consistent with clearness, on the more familiar aspects of his opinions and his career.

Character and circumstances, rather than talent or originality, give to the thoughts of Marcus Aurelius their special value and charm. And although the scanty notices of his life which have come down to us have now been often repeated, it seems necessary to allude to some of the more characteristic of them if we would understand the spiritual outlook of one who is not a closet-philosopher moralising in vacuo, but the son of Pius, the father of Commodus, the master of a declining world.

The earliest statue which we know of Marcus represents him as a youth offering sacrifice. The earliest story of him, before his adoption into the Imperial family, is of his initiation, at eight years old, as a Salian priest of Mars, when the crowns flung by the other priests fell here and there around the recumbent statue, but the crown which young Marcus threw to him lit and rested on the war-god's head. The boy-priest, we are told, could soon conduct all the ceremonies of the Salian cult without the usual prompter, for he served in all its offices, and knew all its hymns by heart. And it well became him thus to begin by exhibiting the characteristic piety of a child,—who passes in his growing years through the forms of worship, as of thought, which have satisfied his remote forefathers, and ripens himself for his

adult philosophies with the consecrated tradition of the past

Our next glimpse is of the boy growing into manhood in the household of his adopted father, Antoninus Pius, whom he is already destined to succeed on the Imperial throne. One of the lessons for which Marcus afterwards revered his father's memory was the lesson of simplicity maintained in the palace of princes, "far removed from the habits of the rich." The correspondence between the Imperial boy and his tutor, Fronto, shows us how pronounced this simplicity was, and casts a curious side-light on the power of the Roman Emperor, who can impress his own individuality with so uncompromising a hand not only on the affairs of the empire, but on the personal habits of his court and *entourage*. In the modern world the more absolute a monarch is in one way, the more is he in another way fettered and constrained, for his absolutism relies on an artificial prestige which can dispense with no means of impressing the vulgar mind. And in freer countries, there is always a set of necessary persons, an habitual tone of manners, which the sovereign cannot afford to ignore. A George III may lead a frugal family life, but he is forced to conciliate and consort with social leaders of habits quite opposite to his own. A William IV who fails to do this adequately is pronounced to be "not in society." Antoninus Pius might certainly have been said to be "out of society," but that there was no society for him to be in except his own. The "*optimates*," whose opinion Cicero treats as the acknowledged standard



—a group of notables enjoying social as well as official pre-eminence—had practically ceased to exist. Even the Senate, whose dignity the Antonines so sedulously cherished, consisted mainly of new and low-born men. Everything depended on the individual tastes of the ruler. Play-actors were at the head of society under Nero, spies under Domitian, philosophers under the Antonines.

The letters of the young Marcus to Fronto are very much such letters as might be written at the present day by the home-taught son of an English squire to a private tutor to whom he was much attached. They are, however, more effusive than an English style allows, and although Marcus in his youth was a successful athlete, they seldom refer to games or hunting. I translate one of them as a specimen of the rest —

“ I slept late this morning on account of my cold, but it is better. From five in the morning till nine I partly read Cato on Agriculture, and partly wrote, not quite such rubbish as yesterday. Then I greeted my father, and then soothed my throat with honey-water without absolutely gargling. Then I attended my father as he offered sacrifice. Then to breakfast. What do you think I ate? only a little bread, though I saw the others devouring beans, onions, and sardines! Then we went out to the vintage, and got hot and merry, but left a few grapes still hanging, as the old poet says, ‘atop on the topmost bough.’ At noon we got home again, I worked a little, but it was not much good. Then I chatted a long time with my mother as she sat on her bed. My conversation consisted of, ‘What do you suppose my Fronto is doing at this moment?’ to which she answered,

And my Gratia, what is she doing? ' and then I, ' And our little birdie, Gratia the less? ' And while we were talking and quarrelling as to which of us loved all of you - the best, the gong sounded, which meant that my father had gone across to the bath. So we bathed and dined in the oil-press room, I don't mean that we bathed in the press-room, but we bathed and then dined, and amused ourselves with listening to the peasants' banter. And now that I am in my own room again, before I roll over and snore, I am fulfilling my promise and giving an account of my day to my dear tutor, and if I could love him better than I do I would consent to miss him even more than I miss him now. Take care of yourself, my best and dearest Fronto, wherever you are. The fact is that I love you, and you are far away "

Among the few hints which the correspondence contains of the pupil's rank is one curiously characteristic of his times and his destiny. Tutor and pupil, it seems, were in the habit of sending to each other "hypotheses," or imaginary cases, for the sake of practice in dealing with embarrassing circumstances, as they arose. Marcus puts to Fronto the following "hard case" "A Roman consul at the public games changes his consular dress for a gladiator's, and kills a lion in the amphitheatre before the assembled people. What is to be done to him?" The puzzled Fronto contents himself with replying that such a thing could not possibly happen. But the boy's prevision was true. A generation later this very thing was done by a man who was not only a Roman consul, but a Roman Emperor, and the son of Marcus himself.

These were Marcus' happiest days. The companionship of Pius was a school of all the virtues. His domestic life with Faustina, if we are to believe contemporary letters rather than the scandal of the next century, was, at first at any rate, a model of happiness and peace. Marcus was already forty years old when Pius died. The nineteen years which remained to him were mainly occupied in driving back Germanic peoples from the northern frontiers of the empire. This labour was interrupted in A.D. 175 by the revolt of Avidius Cassius, an event which Marcus employed as a great occasion for magnanimity. The story is one which some dramatist might well seize upon, and show, with a truer groundwork than Corneille in *Cinna*, how impossible is resentment to the philosophic soul. But the moment in these latter years which may be selected as most characteristic was perhaps that of the departure of Marcus to Germany in A.D. 178 for his last and sternest war. That great irruption of the Marcomanni was compared by subsequent historians to the invasion of Hannibal. It was in fact, and it was dimly felt to be, the beginning of the end. The terrified Romans resorted to every expedient which could attract the favour of heaven or fortify the spirit of man. The Emperor threw a blood-stained spear from the temple of Mars towards the unknown North, invoking thus for the last time in antique fashion the tutelary divinity of Rome. The images of all the gods were laid on couches in the sight of men, and that holy banquet was set before them which constituted their worshippers' most solemn appeal. But no sacrifices

henceforth were to be for long effectual, nor omens favourable again, they could only show the "Roman peace" no longer sacred, the "Roman world" no longer stretching "past the sun's year-long way," but Janus' temple-doors for ever open, and Terminus receding upon Rome. Many new rites were also performed, many foreign gods were approached with strange expiations. But the strangest feature in this religious revival lay in an act of the Emperor himself. He was entreated, says Vulcatius, to give a parting address to his subjects before he set out into the wilderness of the north, and for three days he expounded his philosophy to the people of Rome. The anecdote is a strange one, but hardly in itself improbable. It accords so well with Marcus' trust in the power of reason, his belief in the duty of laying the truth before men! One can imagine the sincere gaze, such as his coins show to us, the hand, as in the great equestrian statue of the Capitol, uplifted, as though to bless, the countenance controlled, as his biographers tell us, to exhibit neither joy nor pain, the voice and diction, not loud nor striking, but grave, and clear, as he bade his hearers "reverence the dæmon within them," and "pass from one unselfish action to another, with memory of God." Like the fabled Arthur, he was, as it were, the conscience amid the warring passions of his knights, like Arthur, he was himself going forth to meet "death, or he knew not what mysterious doom."

For indeed his last years are lost in darkness. A few anecdotes tell of his failing body and resolute will, a few bas-reliefs give in fragments a confused

story of the wilderness and of war We see marshes and forests, bridges and battles, captive Sarmatians brought to judgment, and Marcus still with his hand uplifted as though bestowing pardon or grace

The region in which these last years were spent is to this day one of the most melancholy in Europe The forces of nature run to waste without use or beauty The great Danube spreads himself languidly between uncertain shores As it was in the days of Marcus so is it now, the traveller from Vienna eastward still sees the white mist cling to the desolate river-terraces, the clouds of wild-fowl swoop and settle among the reedy islands, and along the bays and promontories of the brimming stream

But over these years hung a shadow darker than could be cast by any visible foe Plague had become endemic in the Roman world The pestilence brought from Asia by Verus in A D 166 had not yet abated, it had destroyed already (as it would seem) half the population of the Empire, it was achieving its right to be considered by careful historians as the most terrible calamity which has ever fallen upon men Destined, as it were, to sever race from race and era from era, the plague struck its last blow against the Roman people upon the person of the Emperor himself He died in the camp, alone "Why weep for me," were his last words of stern self-suppression, "and not think rather of the pestilence, and of the death of all?"

When the news of his death reached Rome few tears, we are told, were shed For it seemed to the people that Marcus, like Marcellus, had been but

lent to the Roman race, it was natural that he should pass back again from the wilderness to his celestial home. Before the official honours had been paid to him the Senate and people by acclamation at his funeral saluted him as "The Propitious God." No one, says the chronicler, thought of him as Emperor any more, but the young men called on "Marcus, my father," the men of middle age on "Marcus, my brother," the old men on "Marcus, my son." *Homo homini deus est, si suum officium sciat*—and it may well be that those who thus honoured and thus lamented him had never known a truer son or brother, father or god.

It does not fall within the scope of this essay to enumerate in detail the measures by which Marcus had earned the gratitude of the Empire. But it is important to remember that neither war nor philosophy had impaired his activity as an administrator. Politically his reign, like that of Pius, was remarkable for his respectful treatment of the senatorial order. Instead of regarding senators as the natural objects of imperial jealousy, or prey of imperial avarice, he endeavoured by all means to raise their dignity and consideration. Some of them he employed as a kind of privy council, others as governors of cities. When at Rome he attended every meeting of the Senate, and even when absent in Campania he would travel back expressly to be present at any important debate, nor did he ever leave the council-hall till the sitting was adjourned.

While Marcus thus attempted to revive a responsible upper class, he was far from neglecting the

interests of the poor. He developed the scheme of state nurture and education for needy free-born children which the Flavian emperors had begun. He reformed the local government of Italy, and made more careful provision against the recurring danger of scarcity. He instituted the "tutelar<sup>y</sup> præt<sup>or</sup>ship" which was to watch over the rights of orphans—a class often unjustly treated at Rome. And he fostered and supervised that great development of civil and criminal law which, under the Antonines, was steadily giving protection to the minor, justice to the woman, rights to the slave, and transforming the stern maxims of Roman procedure into a fit basis for the jurisprudence of the modern world.

But indeed the true life and influence of Marcus had scarcely yet begun. In his case, as in many others, it was not the main occupation, the ostensible business of his life, which proved to have the most enduring value. His most effective hours were not those spent in his long adjudications, his ceaseless battles, his strenuous ordering of the concerns of the Roman world. Rather they were the hours of solitude and sadness, when, "among the Quadi," "on the Granua," "at Carnuntum," he consoled his lonely spirit by jotting down in fragmentary sentences the principles which were his guide through life. The little volume was preserved by some fortunate accident. For many centuries it was accounted as a kind of curiosity of literature—as heading the brief list of the writings of kings. From time to time some earnest spirit discovered that the help

given by the little book was of surer quality than he could find in many a volume which promised more. One and another student was moved to translate it—from old Gataker of Rotherhithe, completing the work in his seventy-eighth year, as his best preparation for death, to "Cardinal Francis Barberini the elder, who dedicated the translation to his soul, in order to make it redder than his purple at the sight of the virtues of this Gentile"<sup>1</sup> But the complete success of the book was reserved for the present century. I will quote one passage only as showing the position which it has taken among some schools of modern thought—a passage in which a writer celebrated for his nice distinctions and balanced praise has spoken of the *Meditations* in terms of more unmixed eulogy than he has ever bestowed elsewhere —

"Véritable Evangile éternel," says M. Renan, "le livre des Pensées ne vieillira jamais, car il n'affirme aucun dogme. L'Evangile a vieilli en certaines parties, la science ne permet plus d'admettre la naïve conception du surnaturel qui en fait la base. Le surnaturel n'est dans les Pensées qu'une petite tache insignifiante, qui n'atteint pas la merveilleuse beauté du fond. La science pourrait détruire Dieu et l'âme, que le livre des Pensées resterait jeune encore de vie et de vérité. La religion de Marc-Aurèle, comme le fut par moments celle de Jésus, est la religion absolue, celle qui résulte du simple fait d'une haute conscience morale placée en face de l'univers

<sup>1</sup> See the preface to Mr. Long's admirable translation. The quotations from the *Meditations* in this essay are given partly in Mr. Long's words.



Elle n'est ni d'une race ni d'un pays    Aucune révolution, aucun progrès, aucune découverte ne pourront la changer "

What then, we may ask, and how attained to, was the wisdom which is thus highly praised? How came it that a man of little original power, in an age of rhetoric and commonplace, was able to rise to the height of so great an argument, and to make of his most secret ponderings the religious manual of a far-distant world? This question can scarcely be answered without a few preliminary reflections on the historical development of religion at Rome

Among all the civilised religions of antiquity the Roman might well seem the least congenial either to the beliefs or to the emotions of modern times. From the very first it bears all the marks of a political origin. When the antiquarian Varro treats first of the state and then of the gods, "because in order that gods may be established states must first exist," he is but retracing faithfully the real genesis of the cult of Rome. Composed of elements borrowed from various quarters, it dealt with all in a legal, external, unimaginative spirit. The divination and ghost-religion, which it drew from the Etruscans and other primitive sources, survived in the state-augury and in the domestic worship of the Lares, only in a formal and half-hearted way. The nature-religion, which came from the Aryan forefathers of Rome, grew frigid indeed when it was imprisoned in the *Indigitamenta*, or Official Handy-book of the Gods. It is not to Rome, though it may often be to Italy, that the anthropologist must look for instances

of those quaint rites which form in many countries the oldest existing links between civilised and primitive conceptions of the operations of an unseen Power. It is not from Rome that the poet must hope for fresh developments of those exquisite and unconscious allegories, which even in their most hackneyed reproduction still breathe on us the glory of the early world. The most enthusiastic of pagans or neopagans could scarcely reverence with much emotion the botanical accuracy of Nodotus, the god of Nodes, and Volutina, the goddess of Petioles, nor tremble before the terrors of Spiniensis and Robigus, the austere Powers of Blight and Brambles, nor eagerly implore the favour of Stercutius and Sterquilinus, the beneficent deities of Manure <sup>1</sup>

This shadowy system of divinities is a mere elaboration of the primitive notion that religion consists in getting whatever can be got from the gods, and that this must be done by asking the right personages in the proper terms. The boast of historian or poet that the old Romans were "most religious mortals," or that they "surpassed in piety the gods themselves," refers entirely to punctuality of outward observance, considered as a definite *quid pro quo* for the good things desired. It is not hard to be "more pious than the gods" if piety on our part consists in asking decorously for what we want, and piety on their part in immediately granting it.

<sup>1</sup> Of some of these Powers it is hard to say whether they are to be considered as celestial or the reverse. Such are Carnea, the Goddess of Embonpoint, and Genius Portorii Publici, the Angel of Indirect Taxation.

It is plain that it was not in this direction, that the Romans found a vent for the reverence and the self-devotion in which their character was assuredly not deficient. Their true worship, their true piety, were reserved for a more concrete, though still a vast ideal. As has been often said, the religion of the Romans was Rome. Her true saints were her patriots, Curtius and Scævola, Horatius, Regulus, Cato. Her "heaven-descended maxim" was not γνῶθι σεαυτόν, but *Delenda est Carthago*. But a concrete idea must necessarily lose in fixedness what it gains in actuality. As Rome became the Roman Empire the temper of her religion must needs change with the fortunes of its object. While the fates of the city yet hung in the balance the very thought of her had been enough to make *Roman* for all ages a synonym for *heroic* virtue. But when a heterogeneous world-wide empire seemed to derive its unity from the Emperor's personality alone, men felt that the object of so many deeds of piety had disappeared through their very success. Devotion to Rome was transformed into the worship of Cæsar, and the one strain of vital religion which had run through the Commonwealth was stiffened like all the rest into a dead official routine.

Something better than this was needed for cultivated and serious men. To take one instance only, what was the Emperor himself to worship? It might be very well for obsequious provinces to erect statues to the *Indulgentia Cæsaris*. But Cæsar himself could hardly be expected to adore his own Good-humour. In epochs like these, when a national

religion has lost its validity in thoughtful minds, and the nation is pausing, as it were, for further light, there is a fair field for all comers. There is an opportunity for those who wish either to eliminate the religious instinct, or to distort it, or to rationalise it, or to vivify, for the secularist and the charlatan, for the philosopher and the prophet. In Rome there was assuredly no lack of negation and indifference, of superstition and its inseparable fraud. But two streams of higher tendency rushed into the spiritual vacuum, two currents which represented, broadly speaking, the main religious and the main ethical tradition of mankind. The first of these, which we must pass by for the present, had its origin in the legendary Pythagoras and the remoter East. The second took the form of a generalised and simplified Stoicism.

Stoicism, of course, was no new thing in Rome. It had come in with Greek culture at the time of the Punic wars, it had commended itself by its proud precision to Roman habits of thought and life, it had been welcomed as a support for the state religion, a method of allegorising Olympus which yet might be accounted orthodox. The names of Cato and Brutus maintained the Stoic tradition through the death-throes of the Republic. But the stern independence of the Porch was not invoked to aid in the ceremonial revival with which Augustus would fain have renewed the old Roman virtue. It is among the horrors of Nero's reign that we find Stoicism taking its place as a main spiritual support of men. But as it becomes more efficacious it becomes

also less distinctive In Seneca, in Epictetus, most of all in Marcus himself, we see it gradually discarding its paradoxes, its controversies, its character as a specialised philosophical sect We hear less of its logic, its cosmogony, its portrait of the ideal Sage It insists rather on what may be termed the catholic verities of all philosophers, on the sole importance of virtue, the spiritual oneness of the universe, the brotherhood of men From every point of view this latter Stoicism afforded unusual advantages to the soul which aimed at wisdom and virtue It was a philosophy, but by dint of time and trial it had run itself clear of the extravagance and unreality of the schools It was a reform, but its attitude towards the established religion was at once friendly and independent, so that it was neither cramped by deference nor embittered by reaction Its doctrines were old and true, yet it had about it a certain freshness as being in fact the first free and meditative outlook on the universe to which the Roman people had attained And, more than all, it had ready to its hand a large remainder of the most famous store of self-devotedness that the world has seen Stoicism was the heir of the old Roman virtue, happy is the philosophy which can support its own larger creed on the instincts of duty inherited from many a generation of narrow uprightness, of unquestioned law

But the opportunity for the very flower of Stoic excellence was due to the caprice of a great amateur Hadrian admired both beauty and virtue, his choice of Antinous and of Marcus gave to the future world

the standard of the sculptor and the standard of the moralist, the completest types of physical and moral perfection which Roman history has handed down. And yet among the names of his benefactors with which the scrupulous gratitude of Marcus has opened his self-communings, the name *Hadrianus* does not occur. The boy thus raised to empire has passed by Hadrian, who gave him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, for Severus, who taught him to disdain them all.

Among all the *Meditations* none is at once more simple and more original than this exordium of thanksgiving. It is the single-hearted utterance of a soul which knows neither desire nor pride, which considers nothing as gain in her life's journey except the love of those souls who have loved her,—the memory of those who have fortified her by the spectacle and communication of virtue.

The thoughts that follow on this prelude are by no means of an exclusively Stoic type. They are both more emotional and more agnostic than would have satisfied Chrysippus or Zeno. They are not conceived in that tone of certainty and conviction in which men lecture or preach, but with those sad reserves, those varying moods of hope and despondency, which are natural to a man's secret ponderings on the riddle of the world. Even the fundamental Stoic belief in God and Providence is not beyond question in Marcus' eyes. The passages where he repeats the alternative "either gods or atoms" are too strongly expressed to allow us to think that the antithesis is only a trick of style.

" Either confusion and entanglement and scattering again or unity, order, providence If the first case be, why do I wish to live amid the clashings of chance and chaos? or care for aught else but to become earth myself at last? and why am I disturbed, since this dispersion will come whatever I do? but if the latter case be the true one, I reverence and stand firm, and trust in him who rules

" Thus wags the world, up and down, from age to age And either the universal mind determines each event; and if so, accept then that which it determines, or it has ordered once for all, and the rest follows in sequence, or indivisible elements are the origin of all things In a word, if there be a god, then all is well, if all things go at random, act not at random thou "

And along with this speculative openness, so much more sympathetic to the modern reader than the rhetoric of Seneca or even the lofty dogmatism of Epictetus, there is a total absence of the Stoic pride His self-reverence is of that truest kind which is based on a man's conception not of what he is, but of what he ought to be

" Men cannot admire the sharpness of thy wits Be it so, but many other things there are of which thou canst not say, I was not formed for them Show those things which are wholly in thy power to show sincerity, dignity, laboriousness, self-denial, contentment, frugality, kindness, frankness, simplicity, seriousness, magnanimity Seest thou not how many things there are in which, with no excuse of natural incapacity, thou voluntarily fallest short? or art thou compelled by defect of nature to murmur and be stingy and flatter and complain of thy poor body, and cajole and boast, and disquiet thyself in

vain? No, by the gods! but of all these things thou mightest have been rid long ago Nay, if indeed thou be somewhat slow and dull of comprehension, thou must exert thyself about this too, and not neglect it nor be contented with thy dullness "

Words like these, perhaps, exalt human nature in our eyes quite as highly as if we had heard Marcus insisting, like some others of his school, that " the sage is as useful to Zeus, as Zeus to him," or that " courage is more creditable to sages than it is to gods, since gods have it by nature, but sages by practice "

And having thus overheard his self-communings, with what a sense of soundness and reality do we turn to the steady fervour of his constantly repeated ideal!

" Let the god within thee be the guardian of a living being, masculine, adult, political, and a Roman, and a ruler, who has taken up his post in life as one that awaits with readiness the signal that shall summon him away

And such a man, who delays no longer to strive to be in the number of the best, is as a priest and servant of the gods, obeying that god who is in himself enshrined, who renders him unsoiled of pleasure, unharmed by any pain, untouched by insult, feeling no wrong, a wrestler in the noblest struggle, which is, that by no passion he may be overthrown, dyed to the depth in justice, and with his whole heart welcoming whatsoever cometh to him and is ordained "

The ideal is sketched on Stoic lines, but the writer's temperament is not cast in the old Stoic mould He reminds us rather of modern sensitiveness, in his shrinking from the presence of coarse and selfish



persons, and in his desire, obvious enough but constantly checked, for the sympathy and approbation of those with whom he lived. The self-sufficing aspect of Stoicism has in him lost all its exclusiveness, it is represented only by the resolute recurrence to conscience as the one support against the buffets of the world.

"I do my duty, other things trouble me not, for either they are things without life, or things without reason, or things that have wandered and know not the way."

And thus, while all the dealings of Marcus with his fellow-men are summed up in the two endeavours—to imitate their virtues, and to amend, or at least patiently to endure, their defects—it is pretty plain which of these two efforts was most frequently needed. His fragmentary thoughts present us with a long series of struggles to rise from the mood of disgust and depression into the mood of serene benevolence, by dwelling strongly on a few guiding lines of self-admonition.

"Begin the morning by saying to thyself I shall meet with the busybody, the ungrateful, arrogant, deceitful, envious, unsocial. All these things happen to them by reason of their ignorance of what is good and evil. But I who have seen the nature of the good that it is beautiful, and of the bad that it is ugly, and the nature of him who sins, that it is akin to mine, and participates in the same divinity, I can neither be injured by any of them, for no man can fix a foulness on me, nor can I be angry nor hate my brother."

There is reason, indeed, to fear that Marcus loved his enemies too well, that he was too much given to blessing those that cursed him. It is to him, rather than to any Christian potentate, that we must look for an example of the dangers of applying the gospel maxims too unreservedly to the business of the turbid world. For indeed the practical danger lies not in the overt adoption of those counsels of an ideal mildness and mercy, but even in the mere attainment of a temper so calm and lofty that the promptings of vanity or anger are felt no more. The task of curbing and punishing other men, of humiliating their arrogance, exposing their falsity, upbraiding their sloth, is in itself so distasteful, when there is no personal rivalry or resentment to prompt it, that it is sure to be performed too gently, or neglected for more congenial duties. Avidius Cassius, burning his disorderly soldiers alive to gain himself a reputation for vigour, was more comprehensible to the mass of men, more immediately efficacious, than Marcus representing to the selfish and wayward Commodus "that even bees did not act in such a manner, nor any of those creatures which live in troops."

But the very incongruity between the duties which Marcus was called on to perform and the spirit which he brought to their performance, the fate which made him by nature a sage and a saint, by profession a ruler and a warrior, all this gave to his character a dignity and a completeness which it could scarcely otherwise have attained. The master of the world more than other men might feel himself

bound to "live as on a mountain", he whose look was life or death to millions might best set the example of the single-heartedness which need hide the thought of no waking moment from any one's knowledge,—till a man's eyes should reveal all that passed within him, "even as there is no veil upon a star" The Stoic philosophy which required that the sage should be indifferent to worldly goods found its crowning exemplar in a sage who possessed them all

And, indeed, in the case of Marcus the difficulty was not to disdain the things of the earth, but to care for them enough The touch of Cynic crudity with which he analyses such things as men desire, reminds us sometimes of those scornful pictures of secular life which have been penned in the cloister. For that indifference to transitory things which has often made the religious fanatic the worst of citizens is not the danger of the fanatic alone It is a part also of the melancholy of the magnanimous, of the mood when the "joy and gladness" which the Stoics promised to their sage die down in the midst of "such darkness and dirt," as Marcus calls it, "that it is hard to imagine what there is which is worthy to be prized highly, or seriously pursued"

Nay, it seems to him that even if, in Plato's phrase, he could become "the spectator of all time and of all existence," there would be nothing in the sight to stir the exultation, to change the solitude of the sage The universe is full of living creatures, but there is none of them whose existence is so glorious and blessed that by itself it can justify all other Being.

the worlds are destroyed and re-created with an endless renewal, but they are tending to no world more pure than themselves; they are not even, as in Hindoo myth, ripening in a secular expectancy till Buddha come, they are but repeating the same littlenesses from the depth to the height of heaven, and reiterating throughout all eternity the fears and follies of a day

"If thou wert lifted on high and didst behold the manifold fates of men, and didst discern at once all creatures that dwell round about him, in the ether and the air, then howso oft thou thus wert raised on high, these same things thou shouldst ever see, all things alike, and all things perishing And where is, then, the glory?"

Men who look out on the world with a gaze thus disenchanted are apt to wrap themselves in a cynical indifference or in a pessimistic despair But character is stronger than creed, and Marcus carries into the midst of the saddest surroundings his nature's imperious craving to reverence and to love He feels, indeed, that the one joy, which could have attached him to the world is wholly wanting to him

"This is the only thing, if anything there be, which could have drawn thee backwards and held thee still in life, if it had been granted thee to live with men of like principles with thyself But now thou seest how great a pain there is in the discordance of thy life with other men's, so that thou sayest Come quick, O death! lest perchance I too should forget myself"

Nor can he take comfort from any steadfast hope of true fellowship with kindred souls

“ How can it be that the gods, having ordered all things rightly and with good-will towards men, have overlooked this thing alone that some men, virtuous indeed, who have as it were made many a covenant with heaven, and through holy deeds and worship have had closest communion with the divine, that these men, when once they are dead, should not live again, but be extinguished for ever? Yet if this be so, be sure that if it ought to have been otherwise the gods would have done it For were it just, it would also be possible, were it according to nature, nature would have had it so ”

For thus he believes without proof and without argument that all is for the best, that everything which happens is for the advantage of every constituent life in nature, since everything is for the advantage of the whole He will not entertain the idea that the Powers above him may be not all-powerful, or the Wisdom which rules the universe less than all-wise And this optimism comes from no natural buoyancy of temper There is scarcely a trace in the *Meditations* of any mood of careless joy He never rises beyond the august contentment of the man who accepts his fate

“ All things are harmonious to me which are harmonious to thee, O Universe Nothing for me is too early nor too late which is in due time for thee All is fruit to me which thy seasons, O Nature, bear From thee are all things, and in thee all, and all return to thee The poet says, ‘ Dear city of Cecrops , ’ shall I not say, ‘ Dear city of God ? ’ ”

There have been many who, with no more belief than Marcus in a personal immortality, have striven,

like him, to accept willingly the world in which they found themselves placed. But sometimes they have marred the dignity of their position by attempting too eagerly to find a reason for gladness, they have dwelt with exultation upon a terrene future of our race from which Marcus would still have turned and asked, "Where, then, is the glory?" It would have seemed to him that a triumphant tone like this can only come from the soilure of philosophy with something of the modern spirit of industrial materialism and facile enjoyment, he will have preferred that his own serenity should be less near to complacency than to resignation - he would still have chosen the temper of that saintly Stoic, whose rude, strong verses break in with so stern a piety among the fragments of philosophic Greece —

"Lead, lead Cleanthes, Zeus and holy Fate, —

Where'er ye place my post, to serve or wait

Willing I follow, were it not my will,

A baffled rebel I must follow still "

These, however, are differences only of tone and temper overlying what forms in reality a vast body of practical agreement. For the scheme of thought and belief which has thus been briefly sketched is not only in itself a noble and a just one. It is a kind of common creed of wise men, from whom all other views may well seem mere deflections on the side of an unwarranted credulity or of an exaggerated despair. Here, it may be not unreasonably urged, is the moral backbone of all universal religions, and as civilisation has advanced, the practical creed of

all parties, whatever their speculative pretensions, has approximated ever more nearly to these plain principles and uncertain hopes

This view of the tendency of religious progress is undoubtedly the simplest and most plausible which history presents to the philosopher who is not himself pledged to the defence of any one form of what is termed supernatural belief. But it has to contend with grave difficulties of historical fact, and among these difficulties the age of the Antonines presents one of the most considerable. Never had the ground been cleared on so large a scale for pure philosophy, never was there so little external pressure exerted in favour of any traditional faith. The persecutions of the Christians were undertaken on political and moral, rather than on theological grounds, they were the expression of the feeling with which a modern State might regard a set of men who were at once Mormons and Nihilists—refusing the legal tokens of respect to constituted authorities, while suspected of indulging in low immorality at the bidding of an ignorant superstition. And yet the result of this age of tolerance and enlightenment was the gradual recrudescence, among the cultivated as well as the ignorant, of the belief in a perceptible interaction of the seen and the unseen world, culminating at last in the very form of that belief which had shown itself most resolute, most thoroughgoing, and most intractable.

For the triumph of Christianity in the Roman Empire must not be looked upon as an anomalous or an isolated phenomenon. It was rather the

triumph along the whole line, though (as is usual in great triumphs) in an unlooked-for fashion, of a current or tendency which had coexisted obscurely with State-religion, patriotism, and philosophy, almost from the first beginnings of the city. The anomaly, if there were one, consisted in the fact that the hints and elements of this new power, which was destined to be the second life of Rome, were to be found, not in the time-honoured ordinances of her Senate, or the sober wisdom of her schools, but in the fanaticism of ignorant enthusiasts, in the dreams of a mystic-poet, in the alleged, but derided, experiences of a few eccentric philosophers. The introduction of Christianity at Rome was the work not only of Peter and Paul, but of Virgil and Varro.

For amidst the various creeds and philosophies, by aid of which men have ordered their life on earth, the most persistent and fundamental line of division is surely this — The question whether that life is to be ordered by rules drawn from its own experience alone, or whether there are indications which may justly modify our conduct or expectations by some influx of inspiration, or some phenomena testifying to the existence of an unseen world, or to our continued life after the body's decay? The instincts which prompt to this latter view found, as has been already implied, but little sustenance in the established cult of Rome. They were forced to satisfy themselves in a fitful and irregular fashion by Greek and Oriental modes of religious excitement. What sense of elevation or reality may have been present to the partakers in these alien enthusiasms we are not now able



to say The worships of Bacchus and Cybele have been described to us by historians of the same conservative temper as those who afterwards made "an execrable superstition" of the worship of Christ.

Some scattered indications seem to imply a substratum of religious emotion, or of theurgic experiment, more extensive than the ordinary authorities have cared to record. The proud and gay, Catullus rises to his masterpiece in the description of that alternation of reckless fanaticism and sick recoil, which formed throughout the so-called Ages of Faith the standing tragedy of the cloister. More startling still is the story which shows us a group of the greatest personages of Rome in the last century before Christ, Nigidius Figulus, Appius Claudius, Publius Vatinius, Marcus Varro, subjected to police supervision on account of their alleged practice of summoning into visible presence the spirits of the dead. "The whole system," says Professor Mommsen, "obtained its consecration—political, religious, and national—from the name of Pythagoras, the ultra-conservative statesman, whose supreme principle was 'to promote order and to check disorder,' the miracle-worker and necromancer, the primeval sage who was a native of Italy, who was interwoven even with the legendary history of Rome, and whose statue was to be seen in the Roman Forum." This story might seem an isolated one but for one remarkable literary parallel. In Virgil—perhaps the only Roman writer who possessed what would now be termed religious originality—we observe the coexistence of three separate lines of religious thought. There is the conservatism

which loses no opportunity of enforcing the traditional worships of Rome, in accordance at once with the poet's own temper of mind, and with the plan of Augustus' ethical reforms. There is the new fusion<sup>c</sup> of the worship of Rome with the worship of the Emperor—the only symbol of spiritual unity between remote provincials and the imperial city. But finally, in the central passage of his greatest poem,<sup>f</sup> we come on a Pythagorean creed, expressed, indeed, with some confusion and hesitancy, but with earnest conviction and power, and forming, as the well-known fragment of correspondence plainly implies, the dominant pre-occupation of the poet's later life.

Such a scheme, indeed, as the Pythagorean, with its insistence on a personal immortality, and its moral retribution adjusted by means of successive existences with a greater nicety than has been employed by any other creed—such a scheme, if once established, might have satisfied the spiritual needs of the Roman world more profoundly and permanently than either the worship of Jove or the worship of Cæsar. But it was not established. The reasoning, or the evidence, which had impressed Virgil, or the group of philosophers, was not set forth before the mass of men, those instincts which we should now term specifically religious remained unguided, and during the next three centuries we observe the love of the marvellous and the supernatural dissociating itself more and more from any ethical dogma. There are, no doubt, remarkable instances in these centuries of an almost modern spirit of piety associated (as for instance in Apuleius) with the most bizarre religious

vagaries But on the whole the two worships which, until the triumph of Christianity, seemed most likely to overrun the civilised world were the worship of Mithra and the worship of Serapis Now the name of Mithra can hardly be connected with moral conceptions of any kind And the nearest that we can get to the character of Serapis is the fact that he was by many persons considered to be identical either with the principle of good or with the principle of evil

Among these confused and one-sided faiths Christianity had an unique superiority It was the only formulated and intelligible creed which united the two elements most necessary for a widely-received religion, namely, a lofty moral code, and the attestation of some actual intercourse between the visible and the invisible worlds

It was not the morality of the Gospels alone which exercised the attractive force Still less was it the speculations of Pauline theology, the high conceptions which a later age hardened into so immutable a system It was the fact that this lofty teaching was based on beliefs which almost all men held already, that exhortations, nobler than those of Plutarch or Marcus, were supported by marvels better attested than those of Alexander of Abonoteichos, or Apollonius of Tyana In a thousand ways, and by a thousand channels, the old faiths melted into the new It was not only that such apologists as Justin and Minucius Felix were fond of showing that Christianity was, as it were, the crown of philosophy, the consummation of Platonic truth More important was the fact that

the rank and file of Christian converts looked on the universe with the same eyes as the heathens around them. All that they asked of these was to believe that the dimly-realised deities, whom the heathens regarded rather with fear than love, were in reality powers of evil, while above the Oriental additions so often made to their Pantheon was to be superposed one ultimate divinity, alone beneficent, and alone to be adored.

The hierarchy of an unseen universe must needs be a somewhat shadowy and arbitrary thing. To those, indeed, whose imagination is already exercised on such matters a new scheme of the celestial powers may come with an acceptable sense of increasing insight into the deep things of God. But in one who, like Marcus, has learnt to believe that in such matters the truest wisdom is to recognise that we cannot know, in him a scheme like the Christian is apt to inspire incredulity by its very promise of completeness, —suspicion by the very nature of the evidence which is alleged in its support.

Neither the Stoic school in general, indeed, nor Marcus himself, were clear of all superstitious tendency. The early masters of the sect had pushed their doctrine of the solidarity of all things to the point of anticipating that the liver of a particular bullock, itself selected from among its fellows by some mysterious fitness of things, might reasonably give an indication of the result of an impending battle. When it was urged that on this principle everything might be expected to be indicative of everything else, the Stoics answered that so it was, but that only

when such indications lay in the liver could we understand them aright When asked how we came to understand them when thus located, the Stoic doctors seem to have made no sufficient reply We need not suppose that Marcus participated in absurdities like these He himself makes no assertion of this hazardous kind, except only that remedies for his ailments "have been shown to him in dreams" And this is not insisted on in detail, it rather forms part of that habitual feeling or impression which, if indeed it be superstitious, is yet a superstition from which no devout mind, perhaps, was ever wholly free, namely, that he is the object of a special care and benevolence proceeding from some holy power Such a feeling implies no belief either in merit or in privilege beyond that of other men, but just as the man who is strongly willing, though it be proved to him that his choice is determined by his antecedents, must yet feel assured that he can deflect its issue this way or that, even so a man, the habit of whose soul is worship, cannot but see at least a reflection of his own virtue in the arch of heaven, and bathe his spirit in the mirage projected from the well-spring of its own love

For such an instinct, for all the highest instincts of his heart, Marcus would no doubt have found in Christianity a new and full satisfaction The question, however, whether he ought to have become a Christian is not worth serious discussion In the then state of belief in the Roman world it would have been as impossible for a Roman Emperor to become a Christian as it would be at the present day

for a Czar of Russia to become a Buddhist. Some Christian apologists complain that Marcus was not converted by the miracle of the "Thundering Legion." They forget that though some obscure persons may have ascribed that happy occurrence to Christian prayers, the Emperor was assured on much higher authority that he had performed the miracle himself. Marcus, indeed, would assuredly not have insisted on his own divinity. He would not have been deterred by any Stoic exclusiveness from incorporating in his scheme of belief, already infiltrated with Platonic thought, such elements as those apologists who start from St Paul's speech at Athens would have urged him to introduce. But an acceptance of the new faith involved much more than this. It involved tenets which might well seem to be a mere reversion to the world-old superstitions and sorceries of barbarous tribes. Such alleged phenomena as those of possession, inspiration, healing by imposition of hands, luminous appearances, modification and movement of material objects, formed, not, as some later apologists would have it, a mere accidental admixture, but an essential and loudly-asserted element in the new religion. The apparition of its Founder after death was its very *raison d'être* and triumphant demonstration. The Christian advocate may say indeed with reason, that phenomena such as these, however suspicious the associations which they might invoke, however primitive the stratum of belief to which they might seem at first to degrade the disciple, should nevertheless have been examined afresh on their own evidence, and would have been

found to be supported by a consensus of testimony which has since then overcome the world. Addressed to an age in which Reason was supreme, such arguments might have carried convincing weight. But mankind had certainly not reached a point in the age of the Antonines,—if indeed we have reached it yet,—at which the recollections of barbarism were cast into so remote a background that the leaders of civilised thought could lightly reopen questions the closing of which might seem to have marked a clear advance along the path of enlightenment. It is true, indeed, that the path of enlightenment is not a royal road but a labyrinth, and that those who have marched too unhesitatingly in one direction have generally been obliged to retrace their steps, to unravel some forgotten clue, to explore some turning which they had already passed by. But the practical rulers of men must not take the paths which seem to point backwards until they hear in front of them the call of those who have chosen that less inviting way.

An emperor who had "learnt from Diognetus not to give credit to what is said by miracle-workers and jugglers about incantations and the driving away of demons and such things," might well feel that so much as to inquire into the Gospel stories would be a blasphemy against his philosophic creed. Even the heroism of Christian martyrdom left him cold. In words which have become proverbial as a wise man's mistake, he stigmatises the Christian contempt of death as "sheer party spirit." And yet—it is an old thought, but it is impossible not to recur to it once more—what might he not have learnt from

these despised sectaries! the melancholy Emperor from Pothinus and Blandina, smiling on the rack!

Of the Christian virtues, it was not *faith*, which was lacking to him. His faith indeed was not that bastard faith of theologians, which is nothing more than a willingness to assent to historical propositions on insufficient evidence. But it was faith such as Christ demanded of His disciples, the steadfastness of the soul in clinging, spite of doubts, of difficulties, even of despair, to whatever she has known of best, the resolution to stand or fall by the noblest hypothesis. To Marcus the alternative of "gods or atoms"—of a universe ruled either by blind chance or by an intelligent Providence—was ever present and ever unsolved, but in action he ignored that dark possibility, and lived as a member of a sacred cosmos, and co-operant with ordering gods.

Again, it might seem unjust to say that he was wanting in love. No one has expressed with more conviction the interdependence and kinship of men.

"We are made to work together, like feet, like hands, like eyelids, like the rows of the upper and lower teeth." "It is peculiar to man to love even those who do wrong, and thou wilt love them if, when they err, thou bethink thee that they are to thee near akin." "Men exist for the sake of one another; teach them then, or bear with them." "When men blame thee, or hate thee, or revile thee, pass inward to their souls, see what they are. Thou wilt see that thou needst not trouble thyself as to what such men think of thee. And thou must be kindly affectioned to them, for by nature they are friends, and the gods, too, help and answer them in many ways."



" Love men, and love them from the heart " " ' Earth loves the shower,' and ' sacred æther loves ,' and the whole universe loves the making of that which is to be I say then to the universe Even I, too, love as thou "

And yet about the love of a John, a Paul, a Peter, there is the ring of a note which is missing here Stoic love is but an injunction of reason and a means to virtue , Christian love is the open secret of the universe, and in itself the end of all In all that wisdom can teach herein, Stoic and Christian are at one They both know that if a man would save his life he must lose it , that the disappearance of all selfish aims or pleasures in the universal life is the only pathway to peace All religions that are worth the name have felt the need of this inward change , the difference lies rather in the light under which they regard it To the Stoic in the West, as to the Buddhist in the East, it presented itself as a renunciation which became a deliverance, a tranquillity which passed into an annihilation The Christian, too, recognised in the renunciation of the world a deliverance from its evil But his spirit in those early days was occupied less with what he was resigning than with what he gained , the love of Christ constrained him , he died to self to find, even here on earth, that he had passed not into nothingness, but into heaven In his eyes the Stoic doctrine was not false, but partly rudimentary and partly needless His only objection, if objection it could be called, to the Stoic manner of facing the reality of the universe, was that the reality of the universe was so infinitely better than the Stoic supposed

If, then, the Stoic love beside the Christian was "as moonlight unto sunlight, and as water unto wine," it was not only because the Stoic philosophy prescribed the curbing and checking of those natural emotions which Christianity at once guided and intensified by her new ideal. It was because the love of Christ which the Christian felt was not a laborious duty, but a self-renewing, self-intensifying force, a feeling offered as to one who for ever responded to it, as to one whose triumphant immortality had brought His disciples' immortality to light.

So completely had the appearance of Jesus to the faithful after His apparent death altered in their eyes the aspect of the world. So decisive was the settlement of the old alternative, "Either Providence or atoms," which was effected by the firm conviction of a single spirit's beneficent return along that silent and shadowy way. So powerful a reinforcement to Faith and Love was afforded by the third of the Christian trinity of virtues—by the grace of Hope.

But we are treading here on controverted ground. It is not only that this great prospect has not yet taken its place among admitted certainties, that the hope and resurrection of the dead are still called in question. Much more than this, the most advanced school of modern moralists tends rather to deny that "a sure and certain hope" in this matter is to be desired at all. Virtue, it is alleged, must needs lose her disinterestedness if the solution of the great problem were opened to her gaze.

"Pour nous," says M. Renan, who draws this moral especially from the noble disinterestedness of Marcus

himself "pour nous, on nous annoncerait un argument péremptoire en ce genre, que nous ferions comme Saint Louis, quand on lui parla de l'hostie miraculeuse, nous refuserions d'aller voir Qu'avons nous besoin de ces preuves brutales, qui n'ont d'application que dans l'ordre grossier des faits, et qui gêneraient notre liberté?"

This seems a strong argument, and if it be accepted it is practically decisive of the question at issue,—I do not say only between Stoicism and Christianity, but between all those systems which do not seek, and those which do seek, a spiritual communion for man external to his own soul, a spiritual continuance external to his own body If a proof of a beneficent Providence or of a future life be a thing to be deprecated, it will be indiscreet, or even immoral, to inquire whether such proof has been, or can be, obtained The world must stand with Marcus, and there will be no extravagance in M Renan's estimate of the Stoic morality as a sounder, and more permanent system than that of Jesus Himself

But generalisations like this demand a close examination Is the antithesis between interested and disinterested virtue a clear and fundamental one for all stages of spiritual progress? Or may we not find that the conditions of the experiment vary, as it were, as virtue passes through different temperatures, that our formula gives a positive result at one point, a negative at another, and becomes altogether unmeaning at a third?

It will be allowed, in the first place, that for an indefinite time to come, and until the mass of mankind has advanced much higher above the savage

level than is as yet the case, it will be premature to be too fastidious as to the beliefs which prompt them to virtue. The first object is to give them habits of self-restraint and well-doing, and we may be well content if their crude notions of an unseen Power are such as to reinforce the somewhat obscure indications which life on earth at present affords that honesty and truth and mercy bring a real reward to men. But let us pass on to the extreme hypothesis on which the repudiation of any spiritual help for man outside himself must ultimately rest. Let us suppose that man's impulses have become harmonised with his environment, that his tendency to anger has been minimised by long-standing gentleness, his tendency to covetousness by diffused well-being, his tendency to sensuality by the increased preponderance of his intellectual nature. How will the test of his disinterestedness operate then? Why, it will be no more possible then for a sane man to be deliberately wicked than it is possible now for a civilised man to be deliberately filthy in his personal habits. We do not wish now that it were uncertain whether filth were unhealthy in order that we might be the more meritorious in preferring to be clean. And whether our remote descendants have become convinced of the reality of a future life or no, it will assuredly never occur to them that, without it, there might be a question whether virtue was a remunerative object of pursuit. Lapses from virtue there may still be in plenty, but inherited instinct will have made it inconceivable that a man should voluntarily be what Marcus calls a "boil or imposthume

upon the universe," an island of selfishness in the mid-sea of sympathetic joy

It is true, indeed, that in the present age, and for certain individuals, that choice of which M Renan speaks has a terrible, a priceless reality / Many a living memory records some crisis when one who had rejected as unproved the traditional sanctions was forced to face the question whether his virtue had any sanction which still could stand, some night when the foundations of the soul's sleep were broken up, and she asked herself why she still should cleave to the law of other men rather than to some kindlier monition of her own —

‘Doch alles was dazu mich trieb,  
Gott, war so gut ! ach, war so lieb ! ”

To be the conqueror in such a contest is the characteristic privilege of a time of transition like our own But it is not the only, nor even the highest conceivable, form of virtue It is an incident in the moral life of the individual, its possibility may be but an incident in the moral life of the race It is but driving the enemy off the ground on which we wish to build our temple, there may be far greater trials of strength, endurance, courage, before we have raised its dome in air

For after all it is only in the lower stages of ethical progress that to see the right is easy and to decide on doing it is hard The time comes when it is not so much conviction of the desirability of virtue that is needed, as enlightenment to perceive where virtue's upward pathway lies ; not so much

the direction of the will which needs to be controlled, as its force and energy which need to be ever vivified and renewed. It is then that the moralist must needs welcome any influence, if such there be, which can pour into man's narrow vessel some overflowing of an infinite Power. It is then, too, that he will learn to perceive that the promise of a future existence might well be a source of potent stimulus rather than of enervating peace. For if we are to judge of the reward of virtue hereafter by the rewards which we see her achieving here, it is manifest that the only reward which always attends her is herself, that the only prize which is infallibly gained by performing one duty well is the power of performing yet another, the only recompense for an exalted self-forgetfulness is that a man forgets himself always more. Or rather, the only other reward is one whose sweetness also is scarcely realisable till it is attained, it is the love of kindred souls, but a love which recedes ever farther from the flatteries and indulgences which most men desire, and tends rather to become the intimate comradeship of spirits that strive towards the same goal.

Why then should those who would imagine an eternal reward for virtue imagine her as eternally rewarded in any other way? And what need there be in a spiritual law like this to relax any soul's exertion, to encourage any low content? By an unfailing physical law we know that the athlete attains through painful effort that alacrity and soundness which are the health of the body. And if there were an unfailing spiritual law by which the

philosopher might attain, and ever attain increasingly, through strenuous virtue, that energy and self-devotedness which are the health of the soul, would there be anything in the one law or in the other to encourage either the physical or the spiritual voluptuary—the self-indulgence either of the banquet-hall or of the cloister? There would be no need to test men by throwing an artificial uncertainty round the operation of such laws as these, it would be enough if they could desire what was offered to them, the ideal would become the probation

To some minds reflections like these, rather than like M Renan's, will be suggested by the story of Marcus, of his almost unmingled sadness, his almost stainless virtue. All will join, indeed, in admiration for a life so free from every unworthy, every dubious incitement to well-doing. But on comparing this life with the lives of men for whom the great French critic's sympathy is so much less—such men, for instance, as St Paul—we may surely feel that if the universe be in reality so much better than Marcus supposed, it would have done him good, not harm, to have known it, that it would have kindled his wisdom to a fervent glow, such as the world can hardly hope to see, till, if ever it be so, the dicta of science and the promises of religion are at one, till saints are necessarily philosophers, and philosophers saints. And yet, whatever inspiring secrets the future may hold, the lover of humanity can never regret that Marcus knew but what he knew. Whatever winds of the spirit may sweep over the sea of souls, the life of Marcus will remain for ever as the

normal high-water mark of the unassisted virtue of man. No one has shown more simply or more completely what man at any rate must do and be. No one has ever earned the right to say to himself with a more tranquil assurance—in the words which close the *Meditations*—"Départ thou then contented, for he that releaseth thee is content."



# LEONARDO DA VINCI

## HOMO MINISTER ET INTERPRES NATURÆ

IN Vasari's life of Leonardo da Vinci as we now read it there are some variations from the first edition. There, the painter who has fixed the outward type of Christ for succeeding centuries was a bold speculator, holding lightly by other men's beliefs, setting philosophy above Christianity. Words of his, trenchant enough to justify this impression, are not recorded, and would have been out of keeping with a genius of which one characteristic is the tendency to lose itself in a refined and graceful mystery. The suspicion was but the time-honoured mode in which the world stamps its appreciation of one who has thoughts for himself alone, his high indifference, his intolerance of the common forms of things, and in the second edition the image was changed into something fainter and more conventional. But it is still by a certain mystery in his work, and something enigmatical beyond the usual measure of great men, that he fascinates, or perhaps half repels. His life is one of sudden revolts, with intervals in which he works not at all, or apart from the main scope of his work. By a strange fortune the pictures on which his more

popular fame rested disappeared early from the world, like the *Battle of the Standard*, or are mixed obscurely with the product of meaner hands, like the *Last Supper*. His type of beauty is so exotic that it fascinates a larger number than it delights, and seems more than that of any other artist to reflect ideas and views and some scheme of the world within, so that he seemed to his contemporaries to be the possessor of some unsanctified and secret wisdom, as to Michelet and others to have anticipated modern ideas. He trifles with his genius, and crowds all his chief work into a few tormented years of later life, yet he is so possessed by his genius that he passes unmoved through the most tragic events, overwhelming his country and friends, like one who comes across them by chance on some secret errand.

His *legend*, as the French say, with the anecdotes which every one remembers, is one of the most brilliant chapters of Vasari. Later writers merely copied it, until, in 1804, Carlo Amoretti applied to it a criticism which left hardly a date fixed, and not one of those anecdotes untouched. The various questions thus raised have since that time become, one after another, subjects of special study, and mere antiquarianism has in this direction little more to do. For others remain the editing of the thirteen books of his manuscripts, and the separation by technical criticism of what in his reputed works is really his, from what is only half his, or the work of his pupils. But a lover of strange souls may still analyse for himself the impression made on him by those works, and try to reach through it a definition of the chief

elements of Leonardo's genius The *legend*, as corrected and enlarged by its critics, may now and then intervene to support the results of this analysis

His life has three divisions—thirty years at Florence, nearly twenty years at Milan, then nineteen years of wandering, till he sinks to rest under the protection of Francis the First at the *Château de Clou* The dishonour of illegitimacy hangs over his birth Piero Antonio, his father, was of a noble Florentine house, of Vinci in the *Val d'Aino*, and Leonardo, brought up delicately among the true children of that house, was the love-child of his youth, with the keen, puissant nature such children often have We see him in his boyhood fascinating all men by his beauty, improvising music and songs, buying the caged birds and setting them free, as he walked the streets of Florence, fond of odd bright dresses and spirited horses

From his earliest years he designed many objects, and constructed models in relief, of which Vasari mentions some of women smiling His father, pondering over this promise in the child, took him to the workshop of Andrea del Verrocchio, then the most famous artist in Florence Beautiful objects lay about there—reliquaries, pyxes, silver images for the pope's chapel at Rome, strange fancy-work of the middle age, keeping odd company with fragments of antiquity, then but lately discovered Another student Leonardo may have seen there—a lad into whose soul the level light and aerial illusions of Italian sunsets had passed, in after days famous as Perugino Verrocchio was an artist of the earlier

Florentine type, carver, painter, and worker in metals, in one, designer, not of pictures only, but of all things for sacred or household use, drinking-vessels, ambries, instruments of music, making them all fair to look upon, filling the common ways of life with the reflexion of some far-off brightness, and years of patience had refined his hand till his work was now sought after from distant places

It happened that Verrocchio was employed by the brethren of Vallombrosa to paint the Baptism of Christ and Leonardo was allowed to finish an angel in the left-hand corner. It was one of those moments in which the progress of a great thing—here, that of the art of Italy—presses hard on the happiness of an individual, through whose discouragement and decrease, humanity, in more fortunate persons, comes a step nearer to its final success.

For beneath the cheerful exterior of the mere well-paid craftsman, chasing brooches for the copes of *Santa Maria Novella*, or twisting metal screens for the tombs of the Medici, lay the ambitious desire to expand the destiny of Italian art by a larger knowledge and insight into things, a purpose in art not unlike Leonardo's still unconscious purpose, and often, in the modelling of drapery, or of a lifted arm, or of hair cast back from the face, there came to him something of the freer manner and richer humanity of a later age. But in this *Baptism* the pupil had surpassed the master, and Verrocchio turned away as one stunned, and as if his sweet earlier work must thereafter be distasteful to him, from the bright animated angel of Leonardo's hand.

The angel may still be seen in Florence, a space of sunlight in the cold, laboured old picture, but the legend is true only in sentiment, for painting had always been the art by which Verrocchio set least store. And as in a sense he anticipates Leonardo, so to the last Leonardo recalls the studio of Verrocchio, in the love of beautiful toys, such as the vessel of water for a mirror, and lovely needlework about the implicated hands in the *Modesty and Vanity*, and of reliefs, like those cameos which in the *Virgin of the Balances* hang all round the girdle of Saint Michael, and of bright variegated stones, such as the agates in the *Saint Anne*, and in a hieratic preciseness and grace, as of a sanctuary swept and garnished. Amid all the cunning and intricacy of his Lombard manner this never left him. Much of it there must have been in that lost picture of *Paradise*, which he prepared as a cartoon for tapestry, to be woven in the looms of Flanders. It was the perfection of the older Florentine style of miniature-painting, with patient putting of each leaf upon the trees and each flower in the grass, where the first man and woman were standing.

And because it was the perfection of that style, it awoke in Leonardo some seed of discontent which lay in the secret places of his nature. For the way to perfection is through a series of disgusts, and this picture—all that he had done so far in his life at Florence—was after all in the old slight manner. His art, if it was to be something in the world, must be weighted with more of the meaning of nature and purpose of humanity. Nature was "the true mis-

tress of higher intelligences " He plunged, then, into the study of nature And in doing this he followed the manner of the older students, he brooded over the hidden virtues of plants and crystals, the lines traced by the stars as they moved in the sky, over the correspondences which exist between the different orders of living things, through which, to eyes opened, they interpret each other, and for years he seemed to those about him as one listening to a voice, silent for other men

He learned here the art of going deep, of tracking the sources of expression to their subtlest retreats, the power of an intimate presence in the things he handled He did not at once or entirely desert his art, only he was no longer the cheerful, objective painter, through whose soul, as through clear glass, the bright figures of Florentine life, only made a little mellowed and more pensive by the transit, passed on to the white wall He wasted many days in curious tricks of design, seeming to lose himself in the spinning of intricate devices of line and colour He was smitten with a love of the impossible—the perforation of mountains, changing the course of rivers, raising great buildings, such as the church of *San Giovanni*, in the air; all those feats for the performance of which natural magic professed to have the key Later writers, indeed, see in these efforts an anticipation of modern mechanics, in him they were rather dreams, thrown off by the overwrought and labouring brain Two ideas were especially confirmed in him, as reflexes of things that had touched his brain in childhood beyond the depth

of other impressions—the smiling of women and the motion of great waters

And in such studies some interfusion of the extremes of beauty and terror shaped itself, as an image that might be seen and touched, in the mind of this gracious youth, so fixed that for the rest of his life it never left him. As if catching glimpses of it in the strange eyes or hair of chance people, he would follow such about the streets of Florence till the sun went down, of whom many sketches of his remain. Some of these are full of a curious beauty, that remote beauty which may be apprehended only by those who have sought it carefully, who, starting with acknowledged types of beauty, have refined as far upon these, as these refine upon the world of common forms. But mingled inextricably with this there is an element of mockery also, so that, whether in sorrow or scorn, he caricatures Dante even. Legions of grotesques sweep under his hand, for has not nature too her grotesques—the rent rock, the distorting lights of evening on lonely roads, the unveiled structure of man in the embryo, or the skeleton?

All these swarming fancies unite in the *Medusa* of the *Uffizi*. Vasari's story of an earlier Medusa, painted on a wooden shield, is perhaps an invention, and yet, properly told, has more of the air of truth about it than anything else in the whole legend. For its real subject is not the serious work of a man, but the experiment of a child. The lizards and glow-worms and other strange small creatures which haunt an Italian vineyard bring before one the whole picture of a child's life in a Tuscan dwelling—half castle,

half farm—and are as true to nature as the pretended astonishment of the father for whom the boy has prepared a surprise. It was not in play that he painted that other Medusa, the one great picture which he left behind him in Florence. The subject has been treated in various ways, Leonardo alone cuts to its centre, he alone realises it as the head of a corpse, exercising its powers through all the circumstances of death. What may be called the fascination of corruption penetrates in every touch its exquisitely finished beauty. About the dainty lines of the cheek the bat flits unheeded. The delicate snakes seem literally strangling each other in terrified struggle to escape from the Medusa brain. The hue which violent death always brings with it is in the features, features singularly massive and grand, as we catch them inverted, in a dexterous foreshortening, crown foremost, like a great calm stone against which the wave of serpents breaks.

The science of that age was all divination, clairvoyance, unsubjected to our exact modern formulas, seeking in an instant of vision to concentrate a thousand experiences. Later writers, thinking only of the well-ordered treatise on painting which a Frenchman, Raffaello du Fresne, a hundred years afterwards, compiled from Leonardo's bewildered manuscripts, written strangely, as his manner was, from right to left, have imagined a rigid order in his inquiries. But this rigid order would have been little in accordance with the restlessness of his character, and if we think of him as the mere reasoner who subjects design to anatomy and composition to mathematical



rules, we shall hardly have that impression which those around Leonardo received from him. Poring over his crucibles, making experiments with colour, trying, by a strange variation of the alchemist's dream, to discover the secret, not of an elixir to make man's natural life immortal, but of giving immortality to the subtlest and most delicate effects of painting, he seemed to them rather the sorcerer or the magician, possessed of curious secrets and a hidden knowledge, living in a world of which he alone possessed the key. What his philosophy seems to have been most like is that of Paracelsus or Cardan, and much of the spirit of the older alchemy still hangs about it, with its confidence in short cuts and odd byways to knowledge. To him philosophy was to be something giving strange swiftness and double sight, divining the sources of springs beneath the earth or of expression beneath the human countenance, clairvoyant of occult gifts in common or uncommon things, in the reed at the brook-side, or the star which draws near to us but once in a century. How, in this way, the clear purpose was overclouded, the fine chaser's hand perplexed, we but dimly see, the mystery which at no point quite lifts from Leonardo's life is deepest here. But it is certain that at one period of his life he had almost ceased to be an artist.

The year 1483—the year of the birth of Raphael and the thirty-first of Leonardo's life—is fixed as the date of his visit to Milan by the letter in which he recommends himself to Ludovico Sforza, and offers to tell him, for a price, strange secrets in the art of war. It was that Sforza who murdered his

young nephew by slow poison, yet was so susceptible of religious impressions that he blended mere earthly passion with a sort of religious sentimentalism, and who took for his device the mulberry-tree—symbol, in its long delay and sudden yielding of flowers and fruit together, of a wisdom which economises all forces for an opportunity of sudden and sure effect. The fame of Leonardo had gone before him, and he was to model a colossal statue of Francesco, the first Duke of Milan. As for Leonardo himself, he came not as an artist at all, or careful of the fame of one, but as a player on the harp, a strange harp of silver of his own construction, shaped in some curious likeness to a horse's skull. The capricious spirit of Ludovico was susceptible also to the power of music, and Leonardo's nature had a kind of spell in it. Fascination is always the word descriptive of him. No portrait of his youth remains, but all tends to make us believe that up to this time some charm of voice and aspect, strong enough to balance the disadvantage of his birth, had played about him. His physical strength was great, it was said that he could bend a horse shoe like a coil of lead.

The *Duomo*, work of artists from beyond the Alps, so fantastic to the eye of a Florentine used to the mellow, unbroken surfaces of Giotto and Arnolfo, was then in all its freshness, and below, in the streets of Milan, moved a people as fantastic, changeful, and dreamlike. To Leonardo least of all men could there be anything poisonous in the exotic flowers of sentiment which grew there. It was a life of brilliant

sins and exquisite amusements Leonardo became a celebrated designer of pageants, and it suited the quality of his genius, composed, in almost equal parts, of curiosity and the desire of beauty, to take things as they came

Curiosity and the desire of beauty—these are the two elementary forces in Leonardo's genius, curiosity often in conflict with the desire of beauty, but generating, in union with it, a type of subtle and curious grace

The movement of the fifteenth century was twofold, partly the Renaissance, partly also the coming of what is called the "modern spirit," with its realism, its appeal to experience. It comprehended a return to antiquity, and a return to nature. Raphael represents the return to antiquity, and Leonardo the return to nature. In this return to nature, he was seeking to satisfy a boundless curiosity by her perpetual surprises, a microscopic sense of finish by her *finesse*, or delicacy of operation, that *subtilitas naturae* which Bacon notices. So we find him often in intimate relations with men of science,—with Fra Luca Paccioli the mathematician, and the anatomist Marc Antonio della Torre. His observations and experiments fill thirteen volumes of manuscript, and those who can judge describe him as anticipating long before, by rapid intuition, the later ideas of science. He explained the obscure light of the unilluminated part of the moon, knew that the sea had once covered the mountains which contain shells, and of the gathering of the equatorial waters above the polar

He who thus penetrated into the most secret parts of nature preferred always the more to the less remote, what, seeming exceptional, was an instance of law more refined, the construction about things of a peculiar atmosphere and mixed lights. He paints flowers with such curious felicity that different writers have attributed to him a fondness for particular flowers, as Clement the cyclamen, and Rio the jasmín, while, at Venice, there is a stray leaf from his portfolio dotted all over with studies of violets and the wild rose. In him first appears the taste for what is *bizarre* or *recherché* in landscape, hollow places full of the green shadow of bituminous rocks, ridged reefs of trap-rock which cut the water into quaint sheets of light,—their exact antitype is in our own western seas, all the solemn effects of moving water. You may follow it springing from its distant source among the rocks on the heath of the *Madonna of the Balances*, passing, as a little fall, into the treacherous calm of the *Madonna of the Lake*, as a goodly river next, below the cliffs of the *Madonna of the Rocks*, washing the white walls of its distant villages, stealing out in a network of divided streams in *La Gioconda* to the seashore of the *Saint Anne*—that delicate place, where the wind passes like the hand of some fine etcher over the surface, and the untorn shells are lying thick upon the sand, and the tops of the rocks, to which the waves never rise, are green with grass, grown fine as hair. It is the landscape, not of dreams or of fancy, but of places far withdrawn, and hours selected from a thousand with a miracle of *finesse*. Through Leonardo's strange

veil of sight things reach him so , in no ordinary night or day, but as in faint light of eclipse, or in some brief interval of falling rain at daybreak, or through deep water

And not into nature only , but he plunged also into human personality, and became above all a painter of portraits , faces of a modelling more skilful than has been seen before or since, embodied with a reality which almost amounts to illusion, on the dark air To take a character as it was, and delicately sound its stops, suited one so curious in observation, curious in invention He painted thus the portraits of Ludovico's mistresses, Lucretia Crivelli and Cecilia Galerani the poetess, of Ludovico himself, and the Duchess Beatrice The portrait of Cecilia Galerani is lost, but that of Lucretia Crivelli has been identified with *La Belle Feronière* of the Louvre, and Ludovico's pale, anxious face still remains in the Ambrosian Library Opposite is the portrait of Beatrice d'Este, in whom Leonardo seems to have caught some presentiment of early death, painting her precise and grave, full of the refinement of the dead, in sad earth-coloured raiment, set with pale stones

Sometimes this curiosity came in conflict with the desire of beauty , it tended to make him go too far below that outside of things in which art really begins and ends This struggle between the reason and its ideas, and the senses, the desire of beauty, is the key to Leonardo's life at Milan—his restlessness, his endless re-touchings, his odd experiments with colour How much must he leave unfinished, how much recommence ! His problem was the transmutation

of ideas into images What he had attained so far had been the mastery of that earlier Florentine style, with its naïve and limited sensuousness Now he was to entertain in this narrow medium those divinations of a humanity too wide for it, that larger vision of the opening world, which is only not too much for the great, irregular art of Shakespeare, and everywhere the effort is visible in the work of his hands This agitation, this perpetual delay, give him an air of weariness and *ennui* To others he seems to be aiming at an impossible effect, to do something that art, that painting, can never do Often the expression of physical beauty at this or that point seems strained and marred in the effort, as in those heavy German foreheads—too heavy and German for perfect beauty

For there was a touch of Germany in that genius which, as Goethe said, had “thought itself weary”—*mude sich gedacht* What an anticipation of modern Germany, for instance, in that debate on the question whether sculpture or painting is the nobler art!<sup>1</sup> But there is this difference between him and the German, that, with all that curious science, the German would have thought nothing more was needed The name of Goethe himself reminds one how great for the artist may be the danger of over-much science; how Goethe, who, in the *Elective Affinities* and the first part of *Faust* does transmute ideas into images, who wrought many such transmutations, did not invariably find the spell-word, and in the second

<sup>1</sup> How princely, how characteristic of Leonardo, the answer, *Quanto più, un' arte porta seco fatica di corpo, tanto più è vile!*

part of *Faust* presents us with a mass of science which has almost no artistic character at all. But Leonardo will never work till the happy moment comes—that moment of *bien-être*, which to imaginative men is a moment of invention. On this he waits with a perfect patience, other moments are but a preparation, or after-taste of it. Few men distinguish between them as jealously as he. Hence so many flaws even in the choicest work. But for Leonardo the distinction is absolute, and, in the moment of *bien-être*, the alchemy complete: the idea is stricken into colour and imagery: a cloudy mysticism is refined to a subdued and graceful mystery, and painting pleases the eye while it satisfies the soul.

This curious beauty is seen above all in his drawings, and in these chiefly in the abstract grace of the bounding lines. Let us take some of these drawings, and pause over them awhile, and, first, one of those at Florence—the heads of a woman and a little child, set side by side, but each in its own separate frame. First of all, there is much pathos in the reappearance, in the fuller curves of the face of the child, of the sharper, more chastened lines of the worn and older face, which leaves no doubt that the heads are those of a little child and its mother. A feeling for maternity is indeed always characteristic of Leonardo, and this feeling is further indicated here by the half-humorous pathos of the diminutive, rounded shoulders of the child. You may note a like pathetic power in drawings of a young man, seated in a stooping posture, his face in his hands, as

in sorrow, of a slave sitting in an uneasy inclined attitude, in some brief interval of rest, of a small Madonna and Child, peeping sideways in half-re-assured terror, as a mighty griffin with batlike wings, one of Leonardo's finest *inventions*, descends suddenly from the air to snatch up a great wild beast wandering near them. But note in these, as that which especially belongs to art, the contour of the young man's hair, the poise of the slave's arm above his head, and the curves of the head of the child, following the little skull within, thin and fine as some sea-shell worn by the wind.

Take again another head, still more full of sentiment, but of a different kind, a little drawing in red chalk which every one will remember who has examined at all carefully the drawings by old masters at the Louvre. It is a face of doubtful sex, set in the shadow of its own hair, the cheek-line in high light against it, with something voluptuous and full in the eyelids and the lips. Another drawing might pass for the same face in childhood, with parched and feverish lips, but much sweetness in the loose, short-waisted childish dress, with necklace and *bulla*, and in the daintily bound hair. We might take the thread of suggestion which these two drawings offer, when thus set side by side, and, following it through the drawings at Florence, Venice, and Milan, construct a sort of series, illustrating better than anything else Leonardo's type of womanly beauty. Daughters of Herodias, with their fantastic head-dresses knotted and folded so strangely to leave the dainty oval of the face disengaged, they are not of the Christian family, or



of Raphael's They are the clairvoyants, through whom, as through delicate instruments, one becomes aware of the subtler forces of nature, and the modes of their action, all that is magnetic in it, all those finer conditions wherein material things rise to that subtlety of operation which constitutes them spiritual, where only the finer nerve and the keener touch can follow It is as if in certain significant examples we actually saw those forces at their work on human flesh Nervous, electric, faint always with some inexplicable faintness, these people seem to be subject to exceptional conditions, to feel powers at work in the common air unfelt by others, to become, as it were, the receptacle of them, and pass them on to us in a chain of secret influences

But among the more youthful heads there is one at Florence which Love chooses for its own—the head of a young man, which may well be the likeness of Andrea Salaino, beloved of Leonardo for his curled and waving hair—*belli capelli ricci e inanellati*—and afterwards his favourite pupil and servant Of all the interests in living men and women which may have filled his life at Milan, this attachment alone is recorded And in return Salaino identified himself so entirely with Leonardo, that the picture of *Saint Anne*, in the Louvre, has been attributed to him It illustrates Leonardo's usual choice of pupils, men of some natural charm of person or intercourse like Salaino, or men of birth and princely habits of life like Francesco Melzi—men with just enough genius to be capable of initiation into his secret, for the sake of which they were ready to efface their own individuality

Among them, retiring often to the villa of the Melzi at *Canonica al Vaprio*, he worked at his fugitive manuscripts and sketches, working for the present hour, and for a few only, perhaps chiefly for himself. Other artists have been as careless of present or future applause, in self-forgetfulness, or because they set moral or political ends above the ends of art; but in him this solitary culture of beauty seems to have hung upon a kind of self-love, and a carelessness in the work of art of all but art itself. Out of the secret places of a unique temperament he brought strange blossoms and fruits hitherto unknown, and for him, the novel impression conveyed, the exquisite effect woven, counted as an end in itself—a perfect end.

And these pupils of his acquired his manner so thoroughly, that though the number of Leonardo's authentic works is very small indeed, there is a multitude of other men's pictures through which we undoubtedly see him, and come very near to his genius. Sometimes, as in the little picture of the *Madonna of the Balances*, in which, from the bosom of His mother, Christ weighs the pebbles of the brook against the sins of men, we have a hand, rough enough by contrast, working upon some fine hint or sketch of his. Sometimes, as in the subjects of the *Daughter of Herodias* and the *Head of John the Baptist*, the lost originals have been re-echoed and varied upon again and again by Luni and others. At other times the original remains, but has been a mere theme or motive, a type of which the accessories might be modified or changed, and these variations have but brought out the more the purpose, or expression of the original.

It is so with the so-called *Saint John the Baptist* of the Louvre—one of the few naked figures Leonardo painted—whose delicate brown flesh and woman's hair no one would go out into the wilderness to seek, and whose treacherous smile would have us understand something far beyond the outward gesture or circumstance. But the long, reedlike cross in the hand, which suggests Saint John the Baptist, becomes faint in a copy at the Ambrosian Library, and disappears altogether in another version, in the *Palazzo Rosso* at Genoa. Returning from the latter to the original, we are no longer surprised by Saint John's strange likeness to the *Bacchus* which hangs near it, and which set Théophile Gautier thinking of Heine's notion of decayed gods, who, to maintain themselves, after the fall of paganism, took employment in the new religion. We recognise one of those symbolical inventions in which the ostensible subject is used, not as matter for definite pictorial realisation, but as the starting-point of a train of sentiment, subtle and vague as a piece of music. No one ever ruled over the mere *subject* in hand more entirely than Leonardo, or bent it more dexterously to purely artistic ends. And so it comes to pass that though he handles sacred subjects continually, he is the most profane of painters, the given person or subject, Saint John in the Desert, or the Virgin on the knees of Saint Anne, is often merely the pretext for a kind of work which carries one altogether beyond the range of its conventional associations.

About the *Last Supper*, its decay and restorations, a whole literature has risen up, Goethe's pensive

sketch of its sad fortunes being perhaps the best. The death in childbirth of the Duchess Beatrice was followed in Ludovico by one of those paroxysms of religious feeling which in him were constitutional. The low, gloomy Dominican church of *Saint Mary of the Graces* had been the favourite oratory of Beatrice. She had spent her last days there, full of sinister presentiments, at last it had been almost necessary to remove her from it by force, and now it was here that mass was said a hundred times a day for her repose. On the damp wall of the refectory, oozing with mineral salts, Leonardo painted the *Last Supper*. Effective anecdotes were told about it, his retouchings and delays. They show him refusing to work except at the moment of invention, scornful of any one who supposed that art could be a work of mere industry and rule, often coming the whole length of Milan to give a single touch. He painted it, not in fresco, where all must be *impromptu*, but in oils, the new method which he had been one of the first to welcome, because it allowed of so many after-thoughts, so refined a working out of perfection. It turned out that on a plastered wall no process could have been less durable. Within fifty years it had fallen into decay. And now we have to turn back to Leonardo's own studies, above all to one drawing of the central head at the *Brera*, which, in a union of tenderness and severity in the face-lines, reminds one of the monumental work of Mino da Fiesole, to trace it as it was.

Here was another effort to lift a given subject out of the range of its traditional associations. Strange,

after all the mystic developments of the middle age, was the effort to see the Eucharist, not as the pale Host of the altar, but as one taking leave of his friends. Five years afterwards the young Raphael, at Florence, painted it with sweet and solemn effect in the refectory of Saint Onofrio ; but still with all the mystical unreality of the school of Perugino. Vasari pretends that the central head was never finished. But finished or unfinished, or owing part of its effect to a mellowing decay, the head of Jesus does but consummate the sentiment of the whole company—ghosts through which you see the wall, faint as the shadows of the leaves upon the wall on autumn afternoons. This figure is but the faintest, the most spectral of them all.

The *Last Supper* was finished in 1497, in 1498 the French entered Milan, and whether or not the Gascon bowmen used it as a mark for their arrows, the model of Francesco Sforza certainly did not survive. What, in that age, such work was capable of being—of what nobility, amid what racy truthfulness to fact—we may judge from the bronze statue of Bartolomeo Colleoni on horseback, modelled by Leonardo's master, Verrocchio (he died of grief, it was said, because, the mould accidentally failing, he was unable to complete it), still standing in the *piazza* of Saint John and Saint Paul at Venice. Some traces of the thing may remain in certain of Leonardo's drawings, and perhaps also, by a singular circumstance, in a far-off town of France. For Ludovico became a prisoner, and ended his days at Loches in Touraine. After many years of captivity in the

dungeons below, where all seems sick with barbarous feudal memories, he was allowed at last, it is said, to breathe fresher air for awhile in one of the rooms of the great tower still shown, its walls covered with strange painted arabesques, ascribed by tradition to his hand, amused a little, in this way, through the tedious years. In those vast helmets and human faces and pieces of armour, among which, in great letters, the motto *Infelix Sum* is woven in and out, it is perhaps not too fanciful to see the fruit of a wistful after-dreaming over all Leonardo's sundry experiments on the armed figure of the great duke, which had occupied the two so much during the days of their good fortune at Milan.

The remaining years of Leonardo's life are more or less years of wandering. From his brilliant life at court he had saved nothing, and he returned to Florence a poor man. Perhaps necessity kept his spirit excited: the next four years are one prolonged rapture or ecstasy of invention. He painted now the pictures of the Louvre, his most authentic works, which came there straight from the cabinet of Francis the First, at Fontainebleau. One picture of his, the *Saint Anne*—not the *Saint Anne* of the Louvre, but a simple cartoon, now in London—revived for a moment a sort of appreciation more common in an earlier time, when good pictures had still seemed miraculous. For two days a crowd of people of all qualities passed in naïve excitement through the chamber where it hung, and gave Leonardo a taste of the "triumph" of Cimabue. But his work was less with the saints than with the living women of

Florence For he lived still in the polished society that he loved, and in the houses of Florence, left perhaps a little subject to light thoughts by the death of Savonarola—the latest gossip (1869) is of an undraped Monna Lisa, found in some out-of-the-way corner of the late *Orleans* collection—he saw Ginevra di Benci, and Lisa, the young third wife of Francesco del Giocondo As we have seen him using incidents of sacred story, not for their own sake, or as mere subjects for pictorial realisation, but as a cryptic language for fancies all his own, so now he found a vent for his thought in taking one of these languid women, and raising her, as Leda or Pomona, as Modesty or Vanity, to the seventh heaven of symbolical expression

*La Gioconda* is, in the truest sense, Leonardo's masterpiece, the revealing instance of his mode of thought and work Its suggestiveness, only the *Melancholia* of Durer is comparable to it, and no crude symbolism disturbs the effect of its subdued and graceful mystery We all know the face and hands of the figure, set in its marble chair, in that circle of fantastic rocks, as in some faint light under sea Perhaps of all ancient pictures time has chilled it least<sup>1</sup> As often happens with works in which invention seems to reach its limit, there is an element in it given to, not invented by, the master In that inestimable folio of drawings, once in the possession of Vasari, were certain designs by Verrocchio, faces of such impressive beauty that Leonardo in his

<sup>1</sup> Yet for Vasari there was some further magic of crimson in the lips and cheeks, lost for us

boyhood copied them many times. It is hard not to connect with these designs of the elder, by-past master, as with its germinal principle, the unfathomable smile, always with a touch of something sinister in it, which plays all over Leonardo's work. Besides, the picture is a portrait. From childhood we see this image defining itself on the fabric of his dreams; and but for express historical testimony, we might fancy that this was but his ideal lady, embodied and beheld at last. What was the relationship of a living Florentine to this creature of his thought? By what strange affinities had the dream and the person grown up thus apart, and yet so closely together? Present from the first incorporeally in Leonardo's brain, dimly traced in the designs of Verrocchio, she is found present at last in *Il Giocondo's* house. That there is much of mere portraiture in the picture is attested by the legend that by artificial means, the presence of mimes and flute-players, that subtle expression was protracted on the face. Again, was it in four years and by renewed labour never really completed, or in four months and as by stroke of magic, that the image was projected?

The presence that rose thus so strangely beside the waters, is expressive of what in the ways of a thousand years men had come to desire. Hers is the head upon which all "the ends of the world are come," and the eyelids are a little weary. It is a beauty wrought out from within upon the flesh, the deposit, little cell by cell, of strange thoughts and fantastic reveries and exquisite passions. Set it for a moment beside one of those white Greek goddesses



or beautiful women of antiquity, and how would they be troubled by this beauty, into which the soul with all its maladies has passed ! All the thoughts and experience of the world have etched and moulded there, in that which they have of power to refine and make expressive the outward form, the animalism of Greece, the lust of Rome, the mysticism of the middle age with its spiritual ambition and imaginative loves, the return of the Pagan world, the sins of the Borgias. She is older than the rocks among which she sits, like the vampire, she has been dead many times, and learned the secrets of the grave, and has been a diver in deep seas, and keeps their fallen day about her, and trafficked for strange webs with Eastern merchants. and, as Leda, was the mother of Helen of Troy, and, as Saint Anne, the mother of Mary ; and all this has been to her but as the sound of lyres and flutes, and lives only in the delicacy with which it has moulded the changing lineaments, and tinged the eyelids and the hands. The fancy of a perpetual life, sweeping together ten thousand experiences, is an old one, and modern philosophy has conceived the idea of humanity as wrought upon by, and summing up in itself, all modes of thought and life. Certainly Lady Lisa might stand as the embodiment of the old fancy, the symbol of the modern idea.

During these years at Florence Leonardo's history is the history of his art, for himself, he is lost in the bright cloud of it. The outward history begins again in 1502, with a wild journey through central Italy, which he makes as the chief engineer of Cæsar Borgia.

The biographer, putting together the stray jottings of his manuscripts, may follow him through every day of it, up the strange tower of Siena, elastic like a bent bow, down to the seashore at Piombino, each place appearing as fitfully as in a fever dream

One other great work was left for him to do, a work all trace of which soon vanished, *The Battle of the Standard*, in which he had Michelangelo for his rival. The citizens of Florence, desiring to decorate the walls of the great council-chamber, had offered the work for competition, and any subject might be chosen from the Florentine wars of the fifteenth century. Michelangelo chose for his cartoon an incident of the war with Pisa, in which the Florentine soldiers, bathing in the Arno, are surprised by the sound of trumpets, and run to arms. His design has reached us only in an old engraving, which helps us less perhaps than our remembrance of the background of his *Holy Family* in the *Uffizi* to imagine in what superhuman form, such as might have beguiled the heart of an earlier world, those figures ascended out of the water. Leonardo chose an incident from the battle of Anghiari, in which two parties of soldiers fight for a standard. Like Michelangelo's, his cartoon is lost, and has come to us only in sketches, and in a fragment of Rubens. Through the accounts given we may discern some lust of terrible things in it, so that even the horses tore each other with their teeth. And yet one fragment of it, in a drawing of his at Florence, is far different—a waving field of lovely armour, the chased edgings running like lines of sunlight from side to

side Michelangelo was twenty-seven years old, Leonardo more than fifty, and Raphael, then nineteen years of age, visiting Florence for the first time, came and watched them as they worked

We catch a glimpse of Leonardo again, at Rome in 1514, surrounded by his mirrors and vials and furnaces, making strange toys that seemed alive of wax and quicksilver. The hesitation which had haunted him all through life, and made him like one under a spell, was upon him now with double force. No one had ever carried political indifferentism farther, it had always been his philosophy to "fly before the storm", he is for the Sforzas, or against them, as the tide of their fortune turns. Yet now, in the political society of Rome, he came to be suspected of secret French sympathies. It paralysed him to find himself among enemies, and he turned wholly to France, which had long courted him.

France was about to become an Italy more Italian than Italy itself. Francis the First, like Lewis the Twelfth before him, was attracted by the *finesse* of Leonardo's work, *La Gioconda* was already in his cabinet, and he offered Leonardo the little *Château de Clou*, with its vineyards and meadows, in the pleasant valley of the Masse, just outside the walls of the town of Amboise, where, especially in the hunting season, the court then frequently resided. *A Monsieur Lyonard, peinteur du Roy pour Amboise*—so the letter of Francis the First is headed. It opens a prospect, one of the most interesting in the history of art, where, in a peculiarly blent atmosphere, Italian art dies away as a French exotic.

Two questions remain, after much busy antiquarianism, concerning Leonardo's death—the question of the exact form of his religion, and the question whether Francis the First was present at the time. They are of about equally little importance in the estimate of Leonardo's genius. The directions in his will concerning the thirty masses and the great candles for the church of Saint Florentin are things of course, their real purpose being immediate and practical, and on no theory of religion could these hurried offices be of much consequence. We forget them in speculating how one who had been always so desirous of beauty, but desired it always in such precise and definite forms, as hands or flowers or hair, looked forward now into the vague land, and experienced the last curiosity.

1869.

## THE FLORENCE OF DANTE

THE one story in the history of the modern world which rivals in concentrated interest the story of Athens is the story of Florence in the years just before and after the opening of the fourteenth century—the few years, that is, of its highest glory in freedom, in letters, in art. Never since the days of Pericles had such a varied outburst of human energy been summed up in so short a space. Architecture reared the noble monuments of the Duomo and Santa Croce. Cimabue revolutionized painting, and then “the cry was Giotto’s.” Italian poetry, preluded by the canzonets of Guido Cavalcanti and his rivals, rose to its fullest grandeur in the *Commedia* of Dante. Italian prose was born in the works of Malaspina and Dino. Within, the Florentines worked out patiently and bravely amidst a thousand obstacles the problem of free and popular government. Without, they covered sea and land with their commerce, their agents supplied the Papal treasury, while private firms were already beginning that career of vast foreign loans which at a later time enabled the victor of Crécy to equip his armies with Florentine gold.

We can only realise the attitude of Florence at

this moment by its contrast with the rest of Europe. It was a time when Germany was sinking down into feudal chaos under the earlier Hapsburgs. The system of despotic centralization invented by St Louis and perfected by Philippe le Bel was crushing freedom and vigour out of France. If Parliamentary life was opening in England, literature was dead, and a feudalism which had become embittered by the new forms of law which the legal spirit of the age gave it was pressing harder and harder on the peasantry. Even in Italy Florence stood alone. The South lay crushed beneath the oppression of its French conquerors. In the North the earlier communal freedom had already made way for the rule of tyrants when it was just springing into life in the city by the Arno. For it is noteworthy that of all the cities of Italy Florence is the most modern. Genoa and Pisa had been rivals in commercial activity a hundred years before the merchants of Florence were known out of Tuscany. Sicily had caught the gift of song from the Provençal troubadours half a century before the Florentine singers. Too insignificant to share in the great struggle of the Empire and the Papacy, among the last to be divided into Guelph and Ghibelline, Florence emerged into communal greatness when that of Milan or Bologna was already in decay.

The City of the Lily came late to the front to inherit and give fresh vigour to the gifts of all. As the effigies of Byzantine art became living men and women beneath the pencil of Giotto, so the mere

imitative poetry of the Sicilian Court became Italian literature in Dante and Boccaccio. Freedom, slow as it seemed in awakening, nowhere awakened so grandly, nowhere fought so long and stubbornly for life. Dino Compagni sets us face to face with this awakening, with this patient pitiful struggle. His *Chronicle* indeed has been roughly attacked of late by the sweeping scepticism of German critics, but the attack has proved an unsuccessful one. The strongest evidence of its genuineness indeed lies in the impression of a distinct personality which is left on us by a simple perusal of the *Chronicle* itself. Some of its charm no doubt rises from the naive simplicity of Dino's story-telling. With him and with his contemporaries, Malaspina, Dante, and Villani, Italian prose begins, and we can hardly fancy a better training in style for any young Italian than to be brought face to face in Dino with the nervous picturesque accents that marked the birth of his mother-tongue. But the charm is more one of character than one of style. Throughout we feel the man, a man whose temper is so strongly and clearly marked in its contrast with so reflective a temper as Villani's that the German theory which makes his chronicle a mere cento from the later work hardly needs discussion. Dino has the quaint directness, the dramatic force, the tenderness of Froissart, but it is a nobler and more human tenderness, a pity not for the knight only, but for knight and burgher as well. The sham tinsel of chivalry which flutters over the pages of the gay Canon of Liège is exchanged in Dino for a manly patriotism, a love of civic freedom,

of justice, of religion In his quiet way he is a great artist There is an Herodotean picturesqueness as well as an Herodotean simplicity in such a picture as that of Dante's first battle-field, the Florentine victory of Campaldino .

“ On the appointed day the men of Florence advanced their standards to go into the enemies' land, and passed by Casentino along an ill road where, had the enemy found them, they had received no little damage , but such was not the will of God And they came near to Bibbiena, at a place called Campaldino where was the enemy, and there they halted in array of battle The captains of war sent the light-armed foot to the front , and each man's shield, with a red lily on a white ground, was stretched out well before him Then the Bishop, who was short-sighted, asked, ‘ Those there . what walls be they ? ’ They answered him, ‘ The shields of the enemy ’ Messer Barone de' Mangiadori da San Miniato, a chevalier frank and well skilled in deeds of arms, gathered his men-at-arms together and said to them, ‘ My masters, in Tuscan wars men were wont to conquer by making a stout onset, and that lasted but a while, and few men died, for it was not in use to kill Now is the fashion changed, and men conquer by holding their ground stoutly, wherefore I counsel you that ye stand firm and let them assault you ’ And so they settled to do The men of Arezzo made their onset with such vigour and so great force that the body of the Florentines fell back not a little The fight was hard and keen Messer Corso Donati with a brigade of the men of Pistoja charged the enemy in flank , the quarrels from the crossbows poured down like rain , the men of Arezzo had few of them, and were withal charged in flank where they were exposed , the air was covered



with clouds, and there was a very great dust Then the footmen of Arezzo set themselves to creep under the bellies of the horses, knife in hand, and disembowelled them, and some of them penetrated so far that in the very midst of the battalion were many dead of either part. Many that were counted of great prowess were shown vile that day, and many of whom none spoke word won honour

The men of Arezzo were broken, not by cowardice or little prowess, but by the greater number of their enemies were they put to the rout and slain The soldiers of Florence that were used to fighting slew them, the villeins had no pity "

"Pity" is almost the characteristic word of Dino Compagni—pity alike for foe or friend, for the warriors of Arezzo or the starved-out patriots of Pistoja as well as for the heroes of his own Florence; pity for the victims of her feuds, and even for the men who drove them into exile, pity, most of all, for Florence herself We read his story indeed at first with a strange sense of disappointment and surprise To the modern reader the story of Florence in the years which Dino covers is above all the story of Dante As the *Chronicle* jots patiently down the hopes and fears, the failures and successes of the wiser citizens in that struggle for order and good government which brought Dante to his long exile, we feel ourselves standing in the very midst of events out of which grew the threefold Poem of the After-World and face to face with the men who front us in the *Inferno* and *Paradiso* But this is not the world Dino stands in Of what seem to us the greater elements of the life around him he sees and

tells us nothing Of art or letters his *Chronicle* says never a word The name of Dante is mentioned but once, and then without a syllable of comment It is not in Dante that Dino interests himself his one interest, his one passion, is Florence

And yet as we read page after page a new interest in the story grows on us, the interest that Dino himself felt in the tragedy around him Our sympathies go with that earnest group of men to which he belonged, men who struggled honestly to reconcile freedom and order in a State torn with antipathies of the past, with jealousies and ambitions and feuds of the present The terrible sadness of the *Divina Commedia* becomes more intelligible as we follow step by step the ruin of those hopes for his country which Dante entertained as well as Dino And beyond this interest there is the social picture of the Florence of the fourteenth century itself, its strange medley of past and present, the old world of feudalism jostling with the new world of commerce, the trader elbowing the noble and the artisan the trader, an enthusiastic mystical devotion jealous of the new classicalism or the scepticism of men like Guido Cavalcanti, the petty rivalries of great houses alternating with large schemes of public policy, the tenderest poetry with brutal outrage and lust, the art of Giotto with the slow, patient bloodthirst of the vendetta

What was the cause—the question presses on us through every page of Dino or of Dante—what was

the cause of that ruin which waited in Florence as in every Italian city on so short a burst of freedom? What was it that foiled alike the counsel of statesmen and the passionate love of liberty in the people at large? What was it which drove Dante into exile and stung the simple-hearted Dino into a burst of eloquent despair? The answer—if we set aside the silly talk about “democracy” and look simply at the facts themselves—is a very simple one. The ruin of Florentine liberty, like the ruin of liberty elsewhere throughout Italy, lay wholly with its *noblesse*. It was equally perilous for an Italian town to leave its nobles without the walls or to force them to reside within. In their own robber-holds or their own country estates they were a scourge to the trader whose wains rolled temptingly past their walls. Florence, like its fellow Italian States, was driven to the demolition of the feudal castles, and to enforcing the residence of their lords within its own civic bounds. But the danger was only brought nearer home. Excluded by civic jealousy, wise or unwise, from all share in municipal government, their huge palazzi rose like fortresses in every quarter of the city. Within them lay the noble, a wild beast all the fiercer for his confinement in so narrow a den, with the old tastes, hatreds, preferences utterly unchanged, at feud as of old with his fellow-nobles, knit to them only by a common scorn of the burghers and the burgher life around them, stung to madness by his exclusion from all rule in the commonwealth, bitter, revengeful, with the wilfulness of a child, shameless, false, unprincipled.

The story which lies at the opening of the great feud between Guelph and Ghibelline in Florence throws a picturesque light on the temper of its nobility. Buondelmonte, the betrothed lover of a daughter of Oderigo Giantrufetti, passes beneath a palace of the Donati at whose window stands Madonna Aldruda with her two fair daughters. Seeing him pass by Aldruda calls aloud to him, pointing with her finger to the damsel by her side. "Whom have you taken to wife?" she says. "This is the wife I kept for you." The damsel pleased the youth, but his troth bound him, and he answered, "I can wed none other, now at any rate!" "Yes," cried Aldruda, "for I will pay the penalty for thee." "Then will I have her," said Buondelmonte. "Cosa fatta capo ha," was the famous comment of the outraged house—"stone dead has no fellow"—and as Dino puts it, in the most ordinary way in the world, "they settled to kill him the day he was to have married the damsel, and so they did." "Kill, kill," echoes everywhere through the story of these Florentine nobles. Assassination is an event of every day. Corso Donati sends murderers to kill an enemy among the Cerchi. Guido Cavalcanti strives to stab Corso in the back as he passes him. Where the dagger fails, they try poison without scruple. The best of them decline a share in a murder much as an Irish peasant may decline a share in an agrarian outrage, with a certain delicacy and readiness to stand by and see it done. When the assassination of the Bishop of Arezzo was decided on, Guglielmo da Pazzi, who was in the counsel, protested "he would have been content had

it been done without his knowledge, but were the question put to him he might not be guilty of his blood ”

Among such men even Corso Donati towers into a certain grandeur

“ Knight he was of great valour and renown, gentle in blood and manners, of a most fair body even to old age, comely in figure, with delicate features, and a white skin, a pleasing, prudent, and eloquent speaker, one who ever aimed at great ends, friend and comrade of great lords and nobles, a man too of many friends and great fame throughout all Italy Foe he was of the people and its leaders, the darling of soldiers, full of evil devices, evil-hearted, cunning ”

Such was the man who drove Dante into exile —

“ Who for his pride was called ‘ Il Barone,’ so that when he passed through the land many cried ‘ Viva Il Barone ! ’ and the land seemed all his own ”

He stood not merely at the head of the Florentine nobility, but at the head of the great Guelph organization which extended from city to city throughout Tuscany—a league with its own leaders, its own policy, its own treasure In the attempt to seize this treasure for the general service of the State the most popular of Florentine leaders, Giano della Bella, had been foiled and driven into exile An honest attempt to secure the peace of the city by the banishment of Corso and his friends brought about the exile of Dante It is plain that powerless as they were before the united forces of the whole people the nobles were

strong enough by simply biding their time and availing themselves of popular divisions to crush one opponent after another. And yet the struggle against them was one of life and death for the city. No atom of the new civilization, the new spirit of freedom or humanity, seems to have penetrated among them. Behind the gloomy walls of their city fortresses they remained the mere murderous tyrants of a brutal feudalism. "I counsel, lords, that we free ourselves from this slavery," cried Berto Fresco-baldi to his brother nobles in the church of San Jacopo, "let us arm ourselves and run on to the Piazza, and there kill friend and foe alike as many as we find, so that neither we nor our children be ever subject to them more." Those who, like Sismondi, censure the sternness of the laws which pressed upon the nobles forget what wild beasts they were intended to hold down. Their outbreaks were the blind outbreaks of mere ruffians. The victory of Corso over Dante and the wiser citizens was followed by a carnival of bloodshed, firing of houses, pillage and lawlessness which wrings from Dino curses as bitter as those of the *Inferno*.

From the hopeless task of curbing the various elements of disorder by the single force of each isolated city the wiser and more patriotic among the men of that day turned in despair to the Empire. Guelph and Ghibelline, Papalist and Imperialist, were words which as Dante saw had now lost their old meaning. In the twelfth century the Emperor was at once the foe of religion and the one obstacle to the

rising freedom of the towns In the fourteenth that freedom had either perished by its own excesses, or, as at Florence, was strong enough to defy even an Imperial assailant Religion found its bitterest enemy in such a Pope as Boniface VIII, or the church over which he ruled Whatever might have been its fortune under happier circumstances, the great experiment of democratic self-government, of free and independent city-states, had failed, whether from the wars of city with city, or from the civil feuds that rent each in sunder The papacy could furnish no centre of union, its old sanctity was gone, its greed and worldliness weakened it every day On the other hand, the remembrance of the tyranny of Barbarossa, of the terrible struggle by which the peace of Constance had been won, had grown faint and dim in the course of years It was long since Italy had seen an Emperor at all

But the old Ghibellinism had recovered new vigour from an unlooked-for quarter As the revival of the Roman law had given an artificial prestige to the Empire in the twelfth century, so the revival of classical literature threw a new halo around it in the fourteenth To Dante, penetrated with the greater Latin authors, Henry of Luxemburg is no stranger from over the Alps, but the descendant of the Augustus whom his own Vergil had loved and sung The same classical feeling tells on Dino With him Florence is "the daughter of Rome" The pages of Sallust and of Livy have stirred him to undertake her annals, "The remembrance of ancient histories

has long spurred my mind to write the events, full of danger yet reaching to no prosperous end, that this noble city, daughter of Rome, has encountered " It was the same sense that united with his own practical appreciation of the necessities of the time in his impatient longing for the intervention of the new Emperor As Prior, Dino had acted the part of a brave and honest man, striving to conciliate party with party, refusing to break the law, chased at last with the rest of the magistracy from the Palace of the Signory by the violence of Corso Donati and the nobles If he did not share Dante's exile, he had at any rate acted with Dante in the course of policy which brought that penalty on him Both were Priors together in 1300, both have the same passionate love of Florence, the same haughty disdain of the factions that tore it to pieces If the appeal of Dino to his fellows in Santa Trinità is less thrilling than the verse of Dante, it has its own pathetic force "My masters, why will ye confound and undo so good a city? Against whom do ye will to fight? Against your brethren? What victory will ye gain?—none other than weeping!" The words fell on deaf ears, and the smoke of burning streets, slaughter, and exile forced Dino to look to the stranger There is something strangely touching in the dry, passionless way in which he tracks Henry of Luxemburg from city to city, the fire of his real longing only breaking out here and there in pettish outbursts at each obstacle the Emperor finds The weary waiting came to nothing Dino leaves us still looking for Henry's coming, Dante tells us of the death that



dashed all hope to the ground Even in the hour of his despair the poet could console himself by setting his "divino Arrigo" in the regions of the blest What comfort the humble chronicler found whose work we have been studying none can know.

## WORDS ABOUT OXFORD

MANY long years had passed since I visited Oxford,—some twenty-eight or more. I had friends among the resident members of that venerable domicile of learning. Pleasant had been the time that I had spent there, of which intervening years had not diminished the remembrance—perhaps heightened the tone of its colouring. On many accounts I regarded that beautiful city with affectionate veneration. There were more than local attractions to render it interesting. There were the recollections of those who ceased in the interval to be denizens of this world. These could not but breathe sadness over the noble edifices that recalled men, conversations, and convivialities which, however long departed, shadowed upon the mind its own inevitable destiny. Again were those venerable buildings before me in their architectural richness. There were tower, and roof, and gateway, in all their variety of outline, defined with the sharp light and shade peculiar to ecclesiastical architecture. There were tufted groves overshadowing the haunts of learning, and there, too, was old Magdalen, which used to greet our sight so pleasantly upon our approach to the city. I began to fancy I had leaped no gulf of time since, for the Cherwell ran on as of old. I felt

that the happy allusion of Quevedo to the Tiber was not out of place here, "The fugitive is alone <sup>with</sup> permanent" The same river ran on as it had run on before, but the cheerful faces that had been once reflected in its stream had passed away I saw things once familiar as I saw them before, but "the fathers, where were they?" I was in this respect like one awaked from the slumber of an age, who found himself a stranger in his own land

I walked through High Street I entered All Souls' and came out quickly, for the quadrangle, or rather one glance round it, was sufficient to put "the past to pain" I went over the different sites, and even paced Christ Church meadows But I could not deceive myself for a moment There was an indescribable vacuum somewhere that indicated there was no mode of making the past the present What had become of the pleasant faces, the cheerful voices, the animal spirits, which seemed in my eyes to give a soul to those splendid donations of our forefathers to learning in years gone by? That instinct—soul, spirit, whatever it be—which animates and vivifies everything, and without which the palace is not comparable to the hovel possessing it,—that instinct or spirit was absent for me, at least At length I adjourned to the Star, somewhat moody, more than half wishing I had not entered the city I ordered my solitary meal, and began ruminating, as we all do, over the thousandth-time told tale of human destiny by generation after generation I am not sure I did not greet with sullen pleasure a heavy, dark, dense mass of cloud that at that moment canopied

the city The mind finds all kinds of congenialities grateful at such moments Some drops of rain fell, then a shower, tolerably heavy I could not go out again as I intended doing I sat and sipped my wine, thinking of the fate of cities,—of Nineveh the renowned, of the marbles lately recovered from thence with the mysterious arrow-headed characters I thought that some future Layard might exhume the cornices of the Oxford temples The deaths of cities were as inevitable as those of men I felt that my missing friends had only a priority in mortality, and that the law of the Supreme existed to be obeyed without man's questionings

But a sun-burst took place, the shower ceased, all became fresh and clear I saw several gownsmen pass down the street, and I sallied forth again Several who were in front of me, so full was I of old imaginings, I thought might be old friends whom I should recognise How idle! I strolled to the Isis It was all glitter and gaiety The sun shone out warmly and covered the surface of the river with gold Numerous skiffs of the university-men were alive on the water, realizing the lines.

Some lightly o'er the current swim,  
Some show their gaily gilded trim  
Quick glancing to the sun "

Here was the repetition of an old performance, but the actors were new I too had once floated over that glittering water, or lain up by the bank in conversation, or reciting verses, or, perhaps, in that silent,

dreamy vacancy, in which the mind ruminates or rests folded up within itself in the consciousness of its own immortality

Here I must place a word or two in regard to the censures cast upon this magnificent foundation of learning relative to the extravagances of young collegians. Let it be granted, as it is asserted by some, that there is too much exclusiveness, and that there are improvements to be recommended in some of the details of an organization so ancient. It may be true to a certain extent, for what under heaven is perfect? But a vast mass of good is to be brought to bear on the other hand. I cannot, therefore, agree in those censures which journalism has cast upon the officers of the university, as if they encouraged, or, at all events, did not control, the vicious extravagance of young men. I am expressing only an individual opinion, it is true, and this may be a reason why it may be undervalued, when the justice of a question is not the criterion by which it is judged. All that such a foundation can be expected to do is to render the advantages of learning as accessible as possible, upon reasonable terms, that genius, not wealth alone, may be able to avail itself of its advantages. If the present sum be too high, let its reduction be considered with a view to any practicable change. The pecuniary resources of the collegian it becomes no part of the duty of the university to control, beyond the demands necessary for the main object of instruction. As the circumstances of parents vary, so will the pecuniary allowance made to their offspring. It would be a task neither practicable

nor justifiable for the university to regulate the outlay of the collegian, or, in fact, become the paymaster of his *menus plaisirs*. Only let such a task be imagined in its enormity of control, from the son of the nobleman with an allowance of a thousand a year to one of a hundred and fifty pounds. It is not in the college, but prior to the arrival there of the youth, that he should be instructed in the views his relations have in sending him, and be taught that he must not ape the outlay and show of those who have larger means. If a youth orders a dozen coats within a time for which one only would be found adequate, I do not see what his college has to do with it. Youths entering the navy and army are left in a much more extended field of temptation. No time-hallowed walls shelter them. No salutary college rules remind them of their moral duties, daily and almost hourly. They go up and down the world under their own guardianship, exposed to every sinister influence, and with inclinations only restrained by their own monitorship. The college discipline, even if it extend not beyond college duties, is a perpetual remembrancer of the high moral end for which the student is placed within its precincts. His only allure-ment to extravagance is the desire of vying with those who make a greater display than himself, or else it arises from, if possible, a less defensible motive, namely, that of becoming himself an object of emulation to others. It is not the duty of the college authorities to compensate by their watchfulness the effects of a weak understanding, or that lax principle, or the want of self-command, of which the

neglect of the parent or guardian has been the cause. If the freshman is destitute of self-dependence and self-restraint he must suffer from the consequences. Not only in the navy and army is youth exposed to temptations very far beyond the collegian, but in the inns of court young men are left to take care of themselves, in the midst of a great capital, without any surveillance whatever. From these youths arise excellent men of business. Most assuredly under the surveillance of a college in smaller cities, and where many heads of expense are from the nature of their position wholly out of the question, it does seem singular that such complaints should arise. It is true, display is the vice of modern society among the old as well as the young, and in both cases most dishonest means are had recourse to to sustain those appearances, which are all the world looks to. It is possible, therefore, that little efforts have been made to initiate youth, prior to entering the universities, in that path of self-denial and high-mindedness which are the safeguard from vicious prodigality. They bring with them the vices of their caste, whatever that caste may be. Youth is imitative, and seldom a clumsy copyist, of the faults of its elders, provided those faults are fashionable faults, however unprincipled. However this may be, I must protest against the universities being made answerable for these doings. Attempts have been made, and failed, in respect to manners and to credit, and have failed clearly because they were impracticable, and, more than that, better left alone. The university ought not to be answerable in such cases, any more than

the benches for the Temple students It cannot be expected that the noble quadrangles of our colleges are to become something like poor-law prisons, and the regulations of the night be extended over the day The very existence of the collegian, as such, implies something like freedom, both mental and bodily Learning that is converted into a tyranny will never bring forth good fruit It is the duty of parents and schoolmasters to impress upon the mind of youth that a seat of learning is the home of an easy frugality rather than of prodigal rivalry, that the university will only give degrees and honours where there is industry and good moral conduct It is to be feared that youth, quitting the discipline of the school, looks upon the university as the place where he may indulge in his own wayward will, and be as idle and indolent as he please If this be the case the university is not to blame for such lapses, but a bad prior apprehension of duty, and a defective, ill-directed education

It is impossible to read the biographies of some of our most celebrated men, and not to see that with means scanty enough they were enabled to keep their terms with honour, and in the end confer additional celebrity upon the noble foundations where they had studied If such be the case, we have only the result of personal good or ill conduct to explain the whole of the affair But enough on this subject

But it is not the venerable appearance of University College, hallowed by the associations of so many centuries in age, nor Queen's opposite, nor All Souls', nor any other of the colleges as mere buildings, that so connect them with our feelings We must turn the



mind from stone and wood to the humanity in connection with them. It is that which casts over them the "religious light," speaking so sadly and sweetly to the heart. In University College we see the glorious name of Alfred, and nearly a thousand years, with their perished annals, point to it as the witness of their departed successions. Who on seeing New College does not recall William of Wykeham? and then, what a roll of proud names own this renowned university for their *Alma Mater*. The very stones "prate of the whereabout" of things connected with the development of great minds, and while we look without fatigue at the gorgeous mass of buildings in this university, we feel we are contemplating what carries an intimate connexion, in object at least, with that all of man which marches in the track of eternity. It is not mere antiquity, therefore, on which our reverence for a great seminary of learning is founded. Priority of existence has no solid claims to our regard, except for that *verde 'antique* which covers it, as it covers all things past, good or indifferent, it is the connexion of the foundation with the history of man—with the names that, like the flowers called "immortals," bloom amid the wrecks and desolateness with which the flood of ages strew the rearway of humankind.

Of late there has been small response to feelings such as these in the great world, for we have not been looking much toward what is above us, nor discriminating from meaner things those which approach to heroic natures. We must abandon Mammon, politics, and polemics, when we would approach the threshold

of elevated meditation—when we dwell on the illustrious names of the past, and tread over the stones which they trod I never wandered along the banks of the sedgy Cam, at that lone, twilight hour, when the dimness of external objects tends most to concentrate the faculties upon the immediate object of contemplation, but I have fancied the shades of Bacon, Milton, or Locke, to be near me, as the Indian fancies the shades of his fathers haunt the old hunting-grounds of his race I know that these are heterodox feelings in the present day I know that he who speaks of Homer or Milton, for example, is continually answered by the question, “Who reads them now?” The truth being, perhaps, that we are getting too far below them to relish their superior standard in sterling, merit But there are still in our universities, if not elsewhere, some who are content to be the last of the Goths in the estimation of the multitude, who cannot see the Isis, or Cherwell, or the reedy Cam, without feelings of which the crowd knows nothing; who can dream away an hour in the avenue of Christ Church, and almost conjure spirits from the depths of the grave to realize the pictures of imagination, which are there always invested with purity and holiness, so much do external things impress their character on our imaginings This is the true poetry of life, neither found in the haunts of fashion, nor among the denizens of Cornhill or St Giles. The good and deep things of the mind, the search into the secrets of nature, the sublimest truth, the purest philosophy of which man has to boast, has proceeded from those who were inhabitants of such seats of learning It is impos-

sible to state the precise amount of assistance which genius and learning may derive from the ease and peace enjoyed in such a university. They are inestimable to the student from association, tranquillity, and convenience. The very "dim religious light" of college rooms are solicitations to reflection. Then there are the conveniences of first-rate professors, and access to the writings of the learned in all ages. Thus some who professed a distaste for a university life, have returned to it again, and <sup>made it</sup> made it the arena where they have conquered a lasting reputation—such, for example, was the case with Gray the poet.

The increase of knowledge, and consequently of morality, is the great aim of such a noble establishment as this, and the rewards and honours dispensed there are bestowed in proportion to the industry and good conduct of those who receive them. If the offences of freshmen outside the walls be unvisited by the university from wariness in the offenders, or the impossibility of controlling them, they are certain to meet with a just estimation of their demerit here, and, as before noticed, this is perhaps the best mode of repressing them. The assistance derived by the industrious student from the university itself is invaluable. The very locality is an aid to progress. Where can there be places more favourable for thought than those noble buildings, ancient halls, and delightful walks? Everything invites to contemplation. Magdalen always seemed to me as if soliciting the student's presence in a peculiar manner. A favourite resort of mine, at certain times, was the road passing the Observatory, leading to Woodstock.

But of all the college walks, those of Magdalen were the more impressive and attractive. It appeared to embody the whole of the noble city in its own personification, as a single word will sometimes express the pith of an entire sentence. The "Mighty Tom" in the olden time, even of Walter de Mapes, (if its metal was then out of the ore,) never sounded (then perhaps not nine) but the midnight hour, to that worthy archdeacon, with more of the character of its locality, than the visual aspect of Magdalen represents the beautiful city to one in its entirety. It seems a sort of metonymy, Maudlin put for Oxford. The walk is, after all, but a sober path, worthy by association with one of the walks of Eden. Yet it shows no gay foliage, nor "shade above shade a woody theatre," such as is seen on a mountain declivity. It is a simple shadowy walk—shadowy to richness, cool, tranquil, redolent of freshness. There the soul feels "private, inactive, calm, contemplative," linked to things that were and are not. The mellow hue of time, not yet stricken by decay, clothes the buildings of this college, which, compared with other edifices more steeped, in maturity of years, occupies, as it were, a middle term in existence.

The variety of building in this city is amazing, and would occupy a very considerable time to study even imperfectly. At a little distance no place impresses the mind more justly with its own lofty pretensions. The towers, steeples, and domes, rising over the masses of foliage beneath, which conceal the bodies of the edifices, seen at the break of morning or at sunset, appear in great beauty. Bathed in light, although

not the "alabaster tipped with golden spires" of the poet, for even the climate of Oxford is no exception to the defacement of nature's colouring, everywhere that coal smoke ascends, but the *tout ensemble* is truly poetical and magnificent

Oriel still, they say, maintains its precedence of teaching its students how to conduct themselves with a view to university honours, and to the world's respect. The preliminary examinations there have proved a touchstone of merit, and elevated Oriel College into something near the envy of every other in this country. Worthy Oriel, the star of Oxford, "I don't know how it is," said the Rev C C, walking down High Street one day, "but Oriel College is all I envy Oxford. It is the richest gem in the ephod of the high-priest (vice-chancellor) of this university. I should like to steal and transplant it to my *Alma Mater* among the fens."

There was formerly a Welsh harper in Oxford, whom the collegians sometimes denominated King David. He was the first of the Cymri brotherhood I ever heard perform. Since that distant day I have often heard those minstrels in their native land, particularly in North Wales, at Bedd Gelert, Caernarvon, and other places, but I confess I never was so much struck as by this Oxford harper. He often played at the *Angel*, where the university men used to group round him, for he excited general admiration. His music was not of so plaintive a character as that in his own land, or else the scenery of the latter had some effect in saddening the music there through association—perhaps this difference was, after all, only in fancy.

Christchurch, the noblest of the churches! How have I heard with delight its merry peal of bells, and the deep resonance of the "Mighty Tom," that sounds with no "friendly voice" the call home of the students still, I presume, as it did so many years ago! There is a long list of names, of no mean reputation, educated here, since the rapacious Henry VIII seized the foundations, which had belonged to Cardinal Wolsey. The gratitude of posterity, never very strong, has in the present case preserved the remembrance of Wolsey, if I recollect aright, by a statue of the proud man in his cardinal's robes. The grove of trees belonging to Christchurch, and the scenery accompanying the entire buildings, are eminently impressive. Here, when divine service is celebrating, there is a peculiar propriety, or rather adaptation of the architecture to the feeling, the trees, and every accompaniment, are suitable to the end. There is religion or its sentiment addressing the mind here through every sense. All that can raise devotion, in external appliances, combines in a wonderful manner, and when the sound of the organ is reverberated deeply along the vaulted roofs and walls, the effect was indescribably fine. Christchurch walk or meadow is an adjunct to this college, such as few places possess. I have trod it with those who will never tread it again. I have skimmed over its smooth shaven surface when life seemed a vista of unmeasured years. Its very beauty touches upon a melancholy chord, since it vibrates the sound of time passed away with those who lie in dust in distant climates, of whom memory alone is now the only record that they were and are not.

I remember being told by an eminent, but aged doctor in divinity, who had been the better part of his life employed in the education of youth, that he had kept an account of the history of all his pupils as far as he could obtain it, and they were very numerous. From his own tuition—and there were some celebrated names amongst them—he traced them to the university, or to professions of a more active nature than a sojourn at the university would allow. To Oxford he had sent a large number of his pupils. “And afterwards, doctor?” “Some came off nobly there, others I heard of in distant parts of the globe in their country’s service—but it is the common tale with nearly all of them—they are dead.” What hosts, I often thought, who had moved among the deep shades of this university until it became entwined with their earliest affections—who had studied within those embattled walls until the sight of them became almost a part of his existence—what hosts of such have but served to swell the waters of oblivion, and press the associations of a common mortality upon the mind in the reflection on this very truism! The late Sir Egerton Brydges—a writer whose talents, though admitted, were never received as they merited to have been by the world, owing, perhaps, to an untoward disposition in other respects—was of opinion that the calmness and seclusion of a university were not best adapted for calling forth the efforts of genius, but that adversity and some struggling were necessary to bring out greatness of character. He thought that praise enervated the mind, and that to bear it required a much greater degree of fortitude

than to withstand censure The consequence of this would be, that the honours decreed in a university must be pernicious to youth This cannot be conceded Sir Egerton's notion may be just in relation to himself, or to one or two temperaments irregularly constituted, but a university exists not for the exceptions, but for the many How numerous is the list of those who, but for the fostering care of Oxford or Cambridge, would have never been known as the ornament and delight of their fellow-men! How much more numerous is the list of those, whose abilities not rising beyond the circle of social usefulness have lived "obscure to fame," yet owe the pleasure they imparted to their friends, and the beguilement of many troubles inseparable from mortality, to the fruits of their university studies, and to a partial unrolling before them of that map of knowledge, which before those of loftier claims and some hold upon fame had been more amply displayed! In this view of the matter, the justness of which cannot be contested, the utility of such foundations is boundless The effect upon the social body—I do not speak of polemics, but of the sound instruction thus made available—cannot be estimated In the midst of fluctuating systems of instruction, it is something to have a standard by which to test the measure of knowledge imparted to youth If accused of being restricted in variety of knowledge, the perfection and mastery in what is taught must be conceded to Oxford and Cambridge Perhaps there is too much reason to fear, that without these foundations we should speedily fall into a very superficial knowledge, indeed,



of the classical languages of antiquity This would be to exclude ourselves from an acquaintance with all past time, except in monkish fiction and the feudal barbarism of the Goths of the north

There are, I verily believe, or I should rather say there were, imbibed at the university so many attachments at one time to words in place of things, that the collegian in after life became liable to reproach upon this head Pedants are bred everywhere out of literature, and the variety in verbiage once exhibited by some university men has been justly condemned But while such word-worms were crawling here and there out of the porches of our colleges, giants in acquirement were striding over them in their petty convolutions Their intertwinings attracted the attention of the mere gazer, who is always more stricken with any microcosmic object that comes casually in the way and is embraced at a glance, than with objects the magnitude of which demand repeated examinations But all this while the great and glorious spring of knowledge was unpolluted The reign of mere verbiage passed away, the benefits of the universities had never ceased to be imparted the whole time The key to the better stores of knowledge was placed in the hands of every one who chose to avail himself of its advantages The minds of the collegians were filled with an affection for the works of the writers of antiquity, which have been the guide, solace, and pleasure of the greatest and most accomplished men since the Christian era commenced Studies will teach their own use in after life "by the wisdom that is about them and above them, won

by observation," as <sup>an</sup> a great writer observes, but then there *must be* the studies

There seems of late years much less of that <sup>love</sup> feeling for poetry than once existed, the same may be observed in respect to classical learning. Few now regard how perished nations lived and passed away, —how men thought, acted, and were moved, for example, in the time of Pericles or the Roman Augustus. What are they to us? What is blind Meonides to us, or that Roman who wrote odes so beautifully, —who understood so well the philosophy of life and the poetry of life at the spring of Bandusia? In the past generation, a part of the adolescent being and of manhood extended a kindly feeling towards them. We hear no admiration of those immortal strains now. We must turn for them to our universities. People are getting shy of them, as rich men shirk poor friends. Are we in the declining state, that of "mechanical arts and merchandize," to use Lord Bacon's phrase, and is our middle age of learning past? Even then, thank Heaven, we have our universities still, where we may, for a time at least, enter and converse with the spirits of the good, that "sit in the clouds and mock" the rest of the greedy world. They will last our time—glorious mementos of the anxiety of our forefathers for the preservation of learning, hallowed by grateful recollections, by time, renown, <sup>martyrdom</sup> virtue, conquests over ignorance, imperishable gratitude, a proud roll of mighty names in their sons, and the prospect of continuing to be monuments of glory to unborn generations. Long may Oxford and Cambridge stand and brighten with

years, though to some they may not, as they do to me, exhibit a title to the gratitude and admiration of Old England, to which it would be difficult to point out worthy rivals

# AN APOLOGY FOR IDLERS

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

*"Boswell* We grow weary when idle

*"Johnson* That is, sir, because others being busy, we want company, but if we were idle, there would be no growing weary, we should all entertain one another "

Just now, when every one is bound, under pain of a decree in absence, convicting them of *lèse-respectability*, to enter on some lucrative profession, and labour therein with something not far short of enthusiasm, a cry from the opposite party who are content when they have enough, and like to look on and enjoy in the meanwhile, savours a little of bravado and gasconade. And yet this should not be Idleness so called, which does not consist in doing nothing, but in doing a great deal not recognised in the dogmatic formularies of the ruling class, has as good a right to state its position as industry itself. It is admitted that the presence of people who refuse to enter in the great handicap race for sixpenny pieces, is at once an insult and a disenchantment for those who do. A fine fellow (as we see so many) takes his determination, votes for the sixpences, and in the emphatic Americanism, "goes for" them.

And while such an one is ploughing distressfully up the road, it is not hard to understand his resentment when he perceives cool persons in the meadows by the wayside, lying with a handkerchief over their ears and a glass at their elbow Alexander is touched in a very delicate place by the disregard of Diogenes Where was the glory of having taken Rome for those tumultuous barbarians, who poured into the Senate house, and found the Fathers sitting silent and unmoved by their success? It is a sore thing to have laboured along and scaled the arduous hilltops, and when all is done, find humanity indifferent to your achievement Hence physicists condemn the unphysical, financiers have only a superficial toleration for those who know little of stocks; literary persons despise the unlettered, and people of all pursuits combine to disparage those who have none

But though this is one difficulty of the subject, it is not the greatest You could not be put in prison for speaking against industry, but you can be sent to Coventry for speaking like a fool The greatest difficulty with most subjects is to do them well, therefore, please to remember this is an apology. It is certain that much may be judiciously argued in favour of diligence, only there is something to be said against it, and that is what, on the present occasion, I have to say To state one argument is not necessarily to be deaf to all others, and that a man has written a book of travels in Montenegro is no reason why he should never have been to Richmond

It is surely beyond a doubt that people should be a good deal idle in youth. For though here and there a Lord Macaulay may escape from school honours with all his wits about him, most boys pay so dear for their medals that they never afterwards have a shot in their locker, and begin the world bankrupt. And the same holds true during all the time a lad is educating himself, or suffering others to educate him. It must have been a very foolish old gentleman who addressed Johnson at Oxford in these words: "Young man, ply your book diligently now, and acquire a stock of knowledge, for when years come upon you, you will find that poring upon books will be but an irksome task." The old gentleman seems to have been unaware that many other things besides reading grow irksome, and not a few become impossible, by the time a man has to use spectacles and cannot walk without a stick. Books are good enough in their own way, but they are a mighty bloodless substitute for life. It seems a pity to sit, like the Lady of Shalott, peering into a mirror, with your back turned on all the bustle and glamour of reality. And if a man reads very hard, as the old anecdote reminds us, he will have little time for thought.

If you look back on your own education, I am sure it will not be the full, vivid, instructive hours of truancy that you regret, you would rather cancel some lack-lustre periods between sleep and waking in the class. For my own part, I have attended a good many lectures in my time. I still remember that the spinning of a top is a case of Kinetic Stability.

I still remember that Emphyteusis is not a disease, nor Stillicide a crime. But though I would not willingly part with such scraps of science, I do not set the same store by them as by certain other odds and ends that I came by in the open street while I was playing truant. This is not the moment to dilate on that mighty place of education, which was the favourite school of Dickens and of Balzac, and turns out yearly many inglorious masters in the Science of the Aspects of Life. Suffice it to say this: if a lad does not learn in the streets, it is because he has no faculty of learning. Nor is the truant always in the streets, for, if he prefers, he may go out by the gardened suburbs into the country. He may pitch on some tuft of lilacs over a burn, and smoke innumerable pipes to the tune of the water on the stones. A bird will sing in the thicket, and there he may fall into a vein of kindly thought, and see things in a new perspective. Why, if this be not education, what is? We may conceive Mr Worldly Wiseman accosting such an one, and the conversation that should thereupon ensue.

"How now, young fellow, what dost thou here?"

"Truly, sir, I take mine ease."

"Is not this the hour of the class? and shouldst thou not be plying thy Book with diligence, to the end thou mayest obtain knowledge?"

"Nay, but thus also I follow after Learning, by your leave."

"Learning, quotha! After what fashion, I pray thee? Is it mathematics?"

"No, to be sure."

"Is it metaphysics?"

"Nor that."

"Is it some language?"

"Nay, it is no language."

"Is it a trade?"

"Nor a trade neither."

"Why, then, what is't?"

"Indeed, sir, as a time may soon come for me to go upon Pilgrimage, I am desirous to note what is commonly done by persons in my case, and where are the ugliest Sloughs and Thickets on the Road, as also, what manner of Staff is of the best service. Moreover, I lie here, by this water, to learn, by root-of-heart, a lesson which my master teaches me to call Peace, or Contentment."

Hereupon Mr Worldly Wiseman was much commoved with passion, and shaking his cane with a very threatful countenance, broke forth upon this wise. "Learning, quotha!" said he, "I would have all such rogues scourged by the Hangman!"

And so he would go on his way, ruffling out his cravat with a crackle of starch, like a turkey when it spreads its feathers.

Now this, of Mr Wiseman's, is the common opinion. A fact is not called a fact, but a piece of gossip, if it does not fall into one of your scholastic categories. An inquiry must be in some acknowledged direction, with a name to go by, or else you are not inquiring at all, only lounging, and the workhouse is too good for you. It is supposed that all knowledge is at the bottom of a well, or the far end of a telescope. Sainte-Beuve, as he grew older, came to regard all



experience as a single great book, in which to study for a few years ere we go hence, and it seemed all one to him whether you should read in Chapter xx, which is the differential calculus, or in Chapter xxxix, which is hearing the band play in the gardens. As a matter of fact, an intelligent person, looking out of his eyes and hearkening in his ears, with a smile on his face all the time, will get more true education than many another in a life of heroic vigils. (There is certainly some chill and arid knowledge to be found upon the summits of formal and laborious science, but it is all round about you, and for the trouble of looking, that you will acquire the warm and palpitating facts of life. While others are filling their memory with a lumber of words, one-half of which they will forget before the week be out, your truant may learn some really useful art—to play the fiddle, to know a good cigar, or to speak with ease and opportunity to all varieties of men. Many who have “plied their book diligently,” and know all about some one branch or another of accepted lore, come out of the study with an ancient and owl-like demeanour, and prove dry, stockish, and dyspeptic in all the better and brighter parts of life. Many make a large fortune, who remain under-bred and pathetically stupid to the last. And meantime there goes the idler, who began life along with them—by your leave, a different picture. He has had time to take care of his health and his spirits, he has been a great deal in the open air, which is the most salutary of all things for both body and mind, and if he has never read the great Book in very recondite places

he has dipped into it and skimmed it over to excellent purpose. Might not the student afford some Hebrew roots, and the business man some of his half-crowns, for a share of the idler's knowledge of life at large, and Art of Living? Nay, and the idler has another and more important quality than these. I mean his wisdom. He who has much looked on at the childish satisfaction of other people in their hobbies, will regard his own with only a very ironical indulgence. He will not be heard among the dogmatists. He will have a great and cool allowance for all sorts of people and opinions. If he finds no out-of-the-way truths, he will identify himself with no very burning falsehood. His way takes him along a by-road, not much frequented, but very even and pleasant, which is called Commonplace Lane, and leads to the Belvedere of Common-sense. Thence he shall command an agreeable, if no very noble prospect, and while others behold the East and West, the Devil and the Sunrise, he will be contentedly aware of a sort of morning hour upon all sublunary things, with an army of shadows running speedily and in many different directions into the great daylight of Eternity. The shadows and the generations, the shrill doctors and the plangent wars, go by into ultimate silence and emptiness, but underneath all this, a man may see, out of the Belvedere windows, much green and peaceful landscape, many fire-lit parlours, good people laughing, drinking, and making love as they did before the Flood or the French Revolution, and the old shepherd telling his tale under the hawthorn.

Extreme *busyness*, whether at school or college, kirk or market, is a symptom of deficient vitality, and a faculty for idleness implies a catholic appetite and a strong sense of personal identity. There is a sort of dead-alive, hackneyed people about, who are scarcely conscious of living except in the exercise of some conventional occupation. Bring these fellows into the country, or set them aboard ship, and you will see how they pine for their desk or their study. They have no curiosity, they cannot give themselves over to random provocations, they do not take pleasure in the exercise of their faculties for its own sake, and unless Necessity lays about them with a stick, they will even stand still. It is no good speaking to such folk: they *cannot* be idle, their nature is not generous enough, and they pass those hours in a sort of coma, which are not dedicated to furious moiling in the gold-mill. When they do not require to go to the office, when they are not hungry and have no mind to drink, the whole breathing world is a blank to them. (If they have to wait an hour or so for a train, they fall into a stupid trance with their eyes open. To see them, you would suppose there was nothing to look at and no one to speak with, you would imagine they were paralysed or alienated, and yet very possibly they are hard workers in their own way, and have good eyesight for a flaw in a deed or a turn of the market. (They have been to school and college, but all the time they had their eye on the medal, they have gone about in the world and mixed with clever people, but all the time they were thinking of their own affairs.) As if a man's soul were

not too small to begin with, they have dwarfed and narrowed theirs by a life of all work and no play, until here they are at forty, with a listless attention, a mind vacant of all material of amusement, and not one thought to rub against another, while they wait for the train (Before he was breeched, he might have clambered on the boxes, when he was twenty, he would have stared at the girls, but now the pipe is smoked out, the snuff-box empty, and my gentleman sits bolt upright upon a bench, with lamentable eyes. This does not appeal to me as being Success in Life.)

But it is not only the person himself who suffers from his busy habits, but his wife and children, his friends and relations, and down to the very people he sits with in a railway-carriage or an omnibus. Perpetual devotion to what a man calls his business, is only to be sustained by perpetual neglect of many other things. And it is not by any means certain that a man's business is the most important thing he has to do. To an impartial estimate it will seem clear that many of the wisest, most virtuous, and most beneficent parts that are to be played upon the Theatre of Life are filled by gratuitous performers, and pass, among the world at large, as phases of idleness. For in that Theatre, not only the walking gentlemen, singing chambermaids, and diligent fiddlers in the orchestra, but those who look on and clap their hands from the benches, do really play a part and fulfil important offices towards the general result. You are no doubt very dependent on the care of your lawyer and stockbroker, of the guards and signalmen

who convey you rapidly from place to place, and the policemen who walk the streets for your protection, but is there not a thought of gratitude in your heart for certain other benefactors who set you smiling when they fall in your way, or season your dinner with good company? Colonel Newcome helped to lose his friend's money, Fred Bayham had an ugly trick of borrowing shirts, and yet they were better people to fall among than Mr Barnes. And though Falstaff was neither sober nor very honest, I think I could name one or two long-faced Barabbases whom the world could better have done without. Hazlitt mentions that he was more sensible of obligation to Northcote, who had never done him anything he could call a service, than to his whole circle of ostentatious friends, for he thought a good companion emphatically the greatest benefactor. I know there are people in the world who cannot feel grateful unless the favour has been done them at the cost of pain and difficulty. But this is a churlish disposition. A man may send you six sheets of letter-paper covered with the most entertaining gossip, or you may pass half-an-hour pleasantly, perhaps profitably, over an article of his, do you think the service would be greater, if he had made the manuscript in his heart's blood, like a compact with the devil? Do you really fancy you should be more beholden to your correspondent, if he had been damning you all the while for your importunity? (Pleasures are more beneficial than duties because, like the quality of mercy, they are not strained, and they are twice blest.) There must always be two to a kiss, and there may be a score

in a jest, but wherever there is an element of sacrifice, the favour is conferred with pain, and, among generous people, received with confusion. There is no duty we so much underrate as the duty of being happy. (By being happy, we sow anonymous benefits upon the world, which remain unknown even to ourselves, or, when they are disclosed, surprise nobody so much as the benefactor.) The other day, a ragged barefoot boy ran down the street after a marble, with so jolly an air that he set every one he passed into a good humour, one of these persons, who had been delivered from more than usually black thoughts, stopped the little fellow and gave him some money with this remark "You see what sometimes comes of looking pleased." If he had looked pleased before, he had now to look both pleased and mystified. For my part, I justify this encouragement of smiling rather than tearful children, I do not wish to pay for tears anywhere but upon the stage, but I am prepared to deal largely in the opposite commodity. (A happy-man or woman is a better thing to find than a five-pound note; He or she is a radiating focus of goodwill, and their entrance into a room is as though another candle had been lighted.) We need not care whether they could prove the forty-seventh proposition, they do a better thing than that, they practically demonstrate the great Theorem of the Liveableness of Life. Consequently, if a person cannot be happy without remaining idle, idle he should remain. It is a revolutionary precept, but thanks to hunger and the workhouse, one not easily to be abused, and, within practical

limits, it is one of the most incontestable truths in the whole Body of Morality. Look at one of your industrious fellows for a moment, I beseech you (He sows hurry and reaps indigestion, he puts a vast deal of activity out to interest, and receives a large measure of nervous *dérangement* in return. Either he absents himself entirely from all fellowship, and lives a recluse in a garret, with carpet slippers and a leaden inkpot, or he comes among people swiftly and bitterly, in a contraction of his whole nervous system, to discharge some temper before he returns to work. I do not care how much or how well he works, this fellow is an evil feature in other people's lives. (They would be happier if he were dead. They could easier do without his services in the Circumlocution Office, than they can tolerate his fractious spirits.) (He poisons life at the well-head. It is better to be beggared out of hand by a scapegrace nephew, than daily hag-ridden by a peevish uncle.

And what, in God's name, is all this pother about? For what cause do they embitter their own and other people's lives? That a man should publish three or thirty articles a year, that he should finish or not finish his great allegorical picture, are questions of little interest to the world. The ranks of life are full, and although a thousand fall, there are always some to go into the breach. When they told Joan of Arc she should be at home minding women's work, she answered there were plenty to spin and wash. And so, even with your own rare gifts! When nature is "so careless of the single life," why should we coddle ourselves into the fancy that our own is of

exceptional importance? Suppose Shakespeare had been knocked on the head some dark night in Sir Thomas Lucy's preserves, the world would have wagged on better or worse, the pitcher gone to the well, the scythe to the corn, and the student to his book, and no one been any the wiser of the loss. There are not many works extant, if you look the alternative all over, which are worth the price of a pound of tobacco to a man of limited means. This is a sobering reflection for the proudest of our earthly vanities. Even a tobacconist may, upon consideration, find no great cause for personal vainglory in the phrase, for although tobacco is an admirable sedative, the qualities necessary for retailing it are neither rare nor precious in themselves. Alas and alas! you may take it how you will, but the services of no single individual are indispensable. Atlas was just a gentleman with a protracted nightmare! And yet you see merchants who go and labour themselves into a great fortune and thence into the bankruptcy court, scribblers who keep scribbling at little articles until their temper is a cross to all who come about them, as though Pharaoh should set the Israelites to make a pin instead of a pyramid, and fine young men who work themselves into a decline, and are driven off in a hearse with white plumes upon it. Would you not suppose these persons had been whispered, by the Master of the Ceremonies, the promise of some momentous destiny? and that this lukewarm bullet on which they play their farces was the bull's-eye and centre-point of all the universe? And yet it is not so. The ends for which they give away



their priceless youth, for all they know, may be chimerical or hurtful, the glory and riches they expect may never come, or may find them indifferent, and they and the world they inhabit are so inconsiderable that the mind freezes at the thought

# EL DORADO

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

It seems as if a great deal were attainable in a world where there are so many marriages and decisive battles, and where we all, at certain hours of the day, and with great gusto and despatch, stow a portion of victuals finally and irretrievably into the bag which contains us. And it would seem also, on a hasty view, that the attainment of as much as possible was the one goal of man's contentious life. And yet, as regards the spirit, this is but a semblance. We live in an ascending scale when we live happily, one thing leading to another in an endless series. There is always a new horizon for onward-looking men, and although we dwell on a small planet, immersed in petty business and not enduring beyond a brief period of years, we are so constituted that our hopes are inaccessible, like stars, and the term of hoping is prolonged until the term of life. To be truly happy is a question of how we begin and not of how we end, of what we want and not of what we have. An aspiration is a joy for ever, a possession as solid as a landed estate, a fortune which we can never exhaust and which gives us year by year a revenue

of pleasurable activity) To have many of these is to be spiritually rich Life is only a very dull and ill-directed theatre unless we have some interests in the piece, and to those who have neither art nor science, the world is a mere arrangement of colours, or a rough footway where they may very well break their shins It is in virtue of his own desires and curiosities that any man continues to exist with even patience, that he is charmed by the look of things and people, and that he awakens every morning with a renewed appetite for work and pleasure Desire and curiosity are the two eyes through which he sees the world in the most enchanted colours; it is they that make women beautiful or fossils interesting: and the man may squander his estate and come to beggary, but if he keeps these two amulets he is still rich in the possibilities of pleasure Suppose he could take one meal so compact and comprehensive that he should never hunger any more; suppose him, at a glance, to take in all the features of the world and allay the desire for knowledge; suppose him to do the like in any province of experience—would not that man be in a poor way for amusement ever after?

One who goes touring on foot with a single volume in his knapsack reads with circumspection, pausing often to reflect, and often laying the book down to contemplate the landscape or the prints in the inn parlour, for he fears to come to an end of his entertainment, and be left companionless on the last stages of his journey A young fellow recently finished the works of Thomas Carlyle, winding up, if we remember aright, with the ten notebooks upon

Frederick the Great "What!" cried the young fellow, in consternation, "is there no more Carlyle? Am I left to the daily papers?" A more celebrated instance is that of Alexander, who wept bitterly because he had no more worlds to subdue. And when Gibbon had finished the *Decline and Fall*, he had only a few moments of joy, and it was with a "sober melancholy" that he parted from his labours.

Happily we all shoot at the moon with ineffectual arrows, our hopes are set on inaccessible El Dorado, we come to an end of nothing here below. Interests are only plucked up to sow themselves again, like mustard. You would think, when the child was born, there would be an end to trouble, and yet, it is only the beginning of fresh anxieties, and when you have seen it through its teething and its education, and at last its marriage, alas! it is only to have new fears, new quivering sensibilities, with every day, and the health of your children's children grows as touching a concern as that of your own. Again, when you have married your wife, you would think you were got upon a hilltop, and might begin to go downward by an easy slope. But you have only ended courting to begin marriage. Falling in love and winning love are often difficult tasks to overbearing and rebellious spirits, but to keep in love is also a business of some importance, to which both man and wife must bring kindness and goodwill. The true love story commences at the altar, when there lies before the married pair a most beautiful contest of wisdom and generosity, and a life-long struggle towards an unattainable ideal. Unattainable?

Ay, surely unattainable, from the very fact that they are two instead of one

"Of making books there is no end," complained the Preacher, and did not perceive how highly he was praising letters as an occupation. There is no end, indeed, to making books or experiments, or to travel, or to gathering wealth. Problem gives rise to problem. We may study for ever, and we are never as learned as we would. We have never made a statue worthy of our dreams. And when we have discovered a continent, or crossed a chain of mountains, it is only to find another ocean or another plain upon the farther side. In the infinite universe there is room for our swiftest diligence and to spare. It is not like the works of Carlyle, which can be read to an end. Even in a corner of it, in a private park, or in the neighbourhood of a single hamlet, the weather and the seasons keep so deftly changing that although we walk there for a lifetime there will be always something new to startle and delight us.

There is only one wish realisable on the earth, only one thing that can be perfectly attained. Death. And from a variety of circumstances we have no one to tell us whether it be worth attaining.

A strange picture we make on our way to our Chimæras, ceaselessly marching, grudging ourselves the time for rest, indefatigable, adventurous pioneers. It is true that we shall never reach the goal; it is even more than probable that there is no such place; and if we lived for centuries and were endowed with the powers of a god, we should find ourselves not much nearer what we wanted at the end. O toiling

hands of mortals ! O unwearied feet, travelling ye know not whither ! Soon, soon, it seems to you, you must come forth on some conspicuous hilltop, and but a little way farther, against the setting sun, descry the spires of El Dorado Little do ye know your own blessedness, ' for to travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive, and the true success is to labour

# A CHRISTMAS SERMON

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

By the time this paper appears, I shall have been talking for twelve months,<sup>1</sup> and it is thought I should take my leave in a formal and seasonable manner. Valedictory eloquence is rare, and death-bed sayings have not often hit the mark of the occasion. Charles Second, wit and sceptic, a man whose life had been one long lesson in human incredulity, an easy-going comrade, a manœuvring king—remembered and embodied all his wit and scepticism along with more than his usual good humour in the famous “I am afraid, gentlemen, I am an unconscionable time a-dying”

I

“An unconscionable time a-dying—there is the picture (“I am afraid, gentlemen,”) of your life and of mine. The sands run out, and the hours are “numbered and imputed,” and the days go by, and when the last of these finds us, we have been a long time dying, and what else? The very length is something, if we reach that hour of separation undishonoured, and to have lived at all is doubtless

<sup>1</sup> i. e. in the pages of *Scribner's Magazine* (1888)

(in the soldierly expression) to have served There is a tale in Tacitus of how the veterans mutinied in the German wilderness, of how they mobbed Germanicus, clamouring to go home; and of how, seizing their general's hand, these old, war-worn exiles passed his finger along their toothless gums *Sunt lacrymarum* this was the most eloquent of the songs of Simeon And when a man has lived to a fair age, he bears his marks of service He may have never been remarked upon the breach at the head of the army, at least he shall have lost his teeth on the camp bread

The idealism of serious people in this age of ours is of a noble character It never seems to them that they have served enough, they have a fine impatience of their virtues It were perhaps more modest to be singly thankful that we are no worse It is not only our enemies, those desperate characters—it is we ourselves who know not what we do, thence springs the glimmering hope that perhaps we do better than we think that to scramble through this random business with hands reasonably clean, to have played the part of a man or woman with some reasonable fulness, to have often resisted the diabolic, and at the end to be still resisting it, is for the poor human soldier to have done right well To ask to see some fruit of our endeavour is but a transcendental way of serving for reward, and what we take to be contempt of self is only greed of hire

And again if we require so much of ourselves, shall we not require much of others? If we do not genially judge our own deficiencies, is it not to be feared we shall be even stern to the trespasses of others?



And he who (looking back upon his own life) can see no more than that he has been unconscionably long a-dying, will he not be tempted to think his neighbour unconscionably long of getting hanged? It is probable that nearly all who think of conduct at all, think of it too much, it is certain we all think too much of sin. We are not damned for doing wrong, but for not doing right, Christ would never hear of negative morality, *thou shalt* was ever His word, with which He superseded *thou shalt not*. To make our idea of morality centre on forbidden acts is to defile the imagination and to introduce into our judgments of our fellow-men a secret element of gusto. If a thing is wrong for us, we should not dwell upon the thought of it, or we shall soon dwell upon it with inverted pleasure. If we cannot drive it from our minds—one thing of two. either our creed is in the wrong and we must more indulgently remodel it, or else, if our morality be in the right, we are criminal lunatics and should place our persons in restraint. A mark of such unwholesomely divided minds is the passion for interference with others. the Fox without the Tail was of this breed, but had (if his biographer is to be trusted) a certain antique civility now out of date. A man may have a flaw, a weakness, that unfits him for the duties of life, that spoils his temper, that threatens his integrity, or that betrays him into cruelty. It has to be conquered, but it must never be suffered to engross his thoughts. The true duties lie upon the further side, and must be attended to with a whole mind so soon as this preliminary clearing of the decks has been effected. In order that he

may be kind and honest, it may be needful he should become a total abstainer, let him become so then, and the next day let him forget the circumstance. Trying to be kind and honest will require all his thoughts, a mortified appetite is never a wise companion, in so far as he has had to mortify an appetite, he will still be the worse man, and of such an one a great deal of cheerfulness will be required in judging life, and a great deal of humility in judging others.

It may be argued again that dissatisfaction with our life's-endavour springs in some degree from dullness. We require higher tasks, because we do not recognise the height of those we have. Trying to be kind and honest seems an affair too simple and too inconsequential for gentlemen of our heroic mould, we had rather set ourselves to something bold, arduous, and conclusive, we had rather found a schism or suppress a heresy, cut off a hand or mortify an appetite. But the task before us, which is to co-exist with our existence, is rather one of microscopic fineness, and the heroism required is that of patience. There is no cutting of the Gordian knots of life, each must be smilingly unravelled.

To be honest, to be kind—to earn a little and to spend a little less, to make upon the whole a family happier for his presence, to renounce when that shall be necessary and not be embittered, to keep a few friends, but these without capitulation—above all, on the same grim condition, to keep friends with himself—here is a task for all that a man has of fortitude and delicacy. He has an ambitious soul who

would ask more, he has a hopeful spirit who should look in such an enterprise to be successful. There is indeed one element in human destiny that not blindness itself can controvert whatever else we are intended to do, we are not intended to succeed, failure is the fate allotted. It is so in every art and study, it is so above all in the continent art of living well. Here is a pleasant thought for the year's end or for the end of life. Only self-deception will be satisfied, and there need be no despair for the despairer.

## II

But Christmas is not only the mile-mark of another year, moving us to thoughts of self-examination: it is a season, from all its associations, whether domestic or religious, suggesting thoughts of joy. A man dissatisfied with his endeavours is a man tempted to sadness. And in the midst of the winter, when his life runs lowest and he is reminded of the empty chairs of his beloved, it is well he should be condemned to this fashion of the smiling face. Noble disappointment, noble self-denial, are not to be admired, not even to be pardoned, if they bring bitterness. It is one thing to enter the kingdom of heaven maim, another to maim yourself and stay without. And the kingdom of heaven is of the child-like, of those who are easy to please, who love and who give pleasure. Mighty men of their hands, the smiters and the builders and the judges, have lived long and done sternly and yet preserved this lovely character, and among our carpet interests and two-

penny concerns, the shame were indelible if *we* should lose it. Gentleness and cheerfulness, these come before all morality, they are the perfect duties. And it is the trouble with moral men that they have neither one nor other. It was the moral man, the Pharisee, whom Christ could not away with. If your morals make you dreary, depend upon it they are wrong. I do not say "give them up," for they may be all you have, but conceal them like a vice, lest they should spoil the lives of better and simpler people.

A strange temptation attends upon man to keep his eye on pleasures, even when he will not share in them, to aim all his morals against them. This very year a lady (singular iconoclast!) proclaimed a crusade against dolls, and the racy sermon against lust is a feature of the age. I venture to call such moralists insincere. At any excess or perversion of a natural appetite, their lyre sounds of itself with relishing denunciations, but for all displays of the truly diabolic—envy, malice, the mean lie, the mean silence, the calumnious truth, the backbiter, the petty tyrant, the peevish poisoner of family life—their standard is quite different. These are wrong, they will admit, yet somehow not so wrong, there is no zeal in their assault on them, no secret element of gusto warms up the sermon, it is for things not wrong in themselves that they reserve the choicest of their indignation. A man may naturally disclaim all moral kinship with the Reverend Mr Zola or the hobgoblin old lady of the dolls, for these are gross and naked instances. And yet in each of us some

similar element resides The sight of a pleasure in which we cannot or else will not share moves us to a particular impatience It may be because we are envious, or because we are sad, or because we dislike noise and romping—being so refined, or because—being so philosophic—we have an overweighing sense of life's gravity at least, as we go on in years, we are all tempted to frown upon our neighbour's pleasures People are nowadays so fond of resisting temptations here is one to be resisted They are fond of self-denial, here is a propensity that cannot be too peremptorily denied There is an idea abroad among moral people that they should make their neighbours good One person I have to make good myself But my duty to my neighbour is much more nearly expressed by saying that I have to make him happy—if I may

### III

Happiness and goodness, according to canting moralists, stand in the relation of effect and cause There was never anything less proved or less probable our happiness is never in our own hands, we inherit our constitution, we stand buffet among friend and enemies, we may be so built as to feel a sneer or an aspersion with unusual keenness, and so circumstanced as to be unusually exposed to them, we may have nerves very sensitive to pain, and be afflicted with a disease very painful Virtue will not help us, and it is not meant to help us It is not even its own reward, except for the self-centred and—I had almost said—

the unamiable No man can pacify his conscience, if quiet be what he want, he shall do better to let that organ perish from disuse. And to avoid the penalties of the law, and the minor *capitis diminutio* of social ostracism, is an affair of wisdom—of cunning, if you will—and not of virtue

In his own life, then, a man is not to expect happiness, only to profit by it gladly when it shall arise, he is on duty here, he knows not how or why, and does not need to know, he knows not for what hire, and must not ask. Somehow or other, though he does not know what goodness is, he must try to be good, somehow or other, though he cannot tell what will do it, he must try to give happiness to others. And no doubt there comes in here a frequent clash of duties. How far is he to make his neighbour happy? How far must he respect that smiling face, so easy to cloud, so hard to brighten again? And how far, on the other side, is he bound to be his brother's keeper and the prophet of his own morality? How far must he resent evil?

The difficulty is that we have little guidance, Christ's sayings on the point being hard to reconcile with each other, and (the most of them) hard to accept. But the truth of His teaching would seem to be this in our own person and fortune, we should be ready to accept and to pardon all; it is *our* cheek we are to turn, *our* coat that we are to give away to the man who has taken *our* cloak. But when another's face is buffeted, perhaps a little of the lion will become us best. That we are to suffer others to be injured, and stand by, is not conceivable, and surely not desirable.

Revenge, says Bacon, is a kind of wild justice, its judgments at least are delivered by an insane judge, and in our own quarrel we can see nothing truly and do nothing wisely. But in the quarrel of our neighbour, let us be more bold. One person's happiness is as sacred as another's; when we cannot defend both, let us defend one with a stout heart. It is only in so far as we are doing this, that we have any right to interfere. the defence of B is our only ground of action against A. A has as good a right to go to the devil as we to go to glory, and neither knows what he does.

The truth is that all these interventions and denunciations and militant mongerings of moral half-truths, though they be sometimes needful, though they are often enjoyable, do yet belong to an inferior grade of duties. Ill-temper and envy and revenge find here an arsenal of pious disguises; this is the playground of inverted lusts. With a little more patience and a little less temper, a gentler and wiser method might be found in almost every case; and the knot that we cut by some fine heady quarrel-scene in private life, or, in public affairs, by some denunciatory act against what we are pleased to call our neighbour's vices, might yet have been unwoven by the hand of sympathy.

#### IV

To look back upon the past year, and see how little we have striven, and to what small purpose, and how often we have been cowardly and hung back, or temerarious and rushed unwisely in, and how

every day and all day long we have transgressed the law of kindness,—it may seem a paradox, but in the bitterness of these discoveries a certain consolation resides Life is not designed to minister to a man's vanity He goes upon his long business most of the time with a hanging head, and all the time like a blind child Full of rewards and pleasures, as it is—so that to see the day break or the moon rise, or to meet a friend, or to hear the dinner-call when he is hungry, fills him with surprising joys—this world is yet for him, no abiding city Friendships fall through, health fails, weariness assails him, year after year he must thumb the hardly varying record of his own weakness and folly It is a friendly process of detachment When the time comes that he should go, there need be few illusions left about himself *Here lies one who meant well, tried a little, failed much*—surely that may be his epitaph, of which he need not be ashamed Nor will he complain at the summons which calls a defeated soldier from the field defeated, ay, if he were Paul or Marcus Aurelius!—but, if there is still one inch of fight in his old spirit, undishonoured The faith which sustained him in his life-long blindness and life-long disappointment will scarce even be required in this last formality of laying down his arms Give him a march with his old bones; there, out of the glorious sun-coloured earth, out of the day and the dust and the ecstasy—there goes another Faithful Failure!

From a recent book of verse, where there is more than one such beautiful and manly poem, I take this



memorial piece . it says better than I can, what I love to think , let it be our parting word

“ A late lark twitters from the quiet skies ,  
And from the west,  
Where the sun, his day's work ended,  
Lingers as in content,  
There falls on the old, grey city  
An influence luminous and serene,  
A shining peace

“ The smoke ascends  
In a rosy-and-golden haze    The spires  
Shine, and are changed    In the valley  
Shadows rise    The lark sings on    The sun,  
Closing his benediction,  
Sinks, and the darkening air  
Thrills with a sense of the triumphing night—  
Night, with her train of stars  
And her great gift of sleep

“ So be my passing !  
My task accomplished and the long day done,  
My wages taken, and in my heart  
Some late lark singing,  
Let me be gathered to the quiet west,  
The sundown splendid and serene,  
Death ” <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> From *A Book of Verses*, by William Ernest Henley    D Nutt, 1888

# NOTES

## MATTHEW ARNOLD WORDSWORTH

Matthew Arnold was born at Laleham at the end of 1822, and was educated at Rugby, of which his father was the celebrated Head Master, and Oxford. At Oxford he won the Newdigate prize and a Fellowship. In 1851 he became an Inspector of Schools, and in 1857 Professor of Poetry at Oxford. His earliest of poems appeared in 1848. In 1865, at the age of forty-three, he published the first volume of the now famous *Essays in Criticism*, which made him at once assume the position of a critic of the foremost rank. After this came a series of works dealing with religious and social subjects, of which *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) and *Literature and Dogma* (1873), are the most characteristic. His later volumes of poetry appeared in 1852, 1853, 1855, and 1867, and collected poems between 1877 and 1885. His *Mixed Essays* (1879), *Discourses in America* (1885), and last of all his *Essays in Criticism, Second Series*, published after his death and containing some of his most characteristic work, show a return to his earlier themes.

Wordsworth, the subject of the present essay, was born in 1770. After leaving Cambridge in 1791 he was attracted like most of the rising generation, by the French Revolution, and travelled in France, where he was disillusioned by the Reign of Terror. In 1798 appeared his *Lyrical Ballads*, in conjunction with Coleridge. This work marks the beginning of a new era in English poetry, the revolt against the now moribund classicism of the eighteenth century. From 1813 to his death in 1850, Wordsworth dwelt at

Rydal Mount in the Lake District In 1805 appeared the *Prelude*, and in 1814 the *Excursion*, blank verse poems dealing with the growth of the poet's mind The rest of his life is only marked by the publication of successive volumes of poems {Wordsworth is, essentially, a poet with a purpose, and it is this sense of a mission which makes him our greatest philosophical poet, the interpreter of Nature to man} The great and striking feature of the *Lyrical Ballads* was its revolt against the insipid and conventional "poetic diction" of the eighteenth century (Wordsworth contended that poetry should be written in "the ordinary language of everyday life" In choice of subject, too, he found his inspiration as much in the simplest flower, or the hum-drum existence of the Westmorland peasant, as in the most exalted themes There is no doubt that, both in manner and matter, he pushed his theories to excess, and it was left to Coleridge in his *Biographia Literaria* to re-state them more temperately and philosophically Arnold finds that the crowning excellence of Wordsworth lies in his *interpretation of life* He feels to a supreme degree the joy offered to us in Nature, by the simple affections and duties of ordinary life, and he teaches us to share it) In order fully to appreciate Arnold's position in the matter, the student should also read his essay on *The Study of Poetry*, and Dean Church's excellent introduction to the poems of Wordsworth in Ward's *English Poets*, vol iv, and consult, if possible, the literary chapters of the *Biographia Literaria*

p 3, l 27 Renan (1823-92) was educated for the priesthood, but his Oriental studies led him to doubt the correctness of the Catholic position, and ultimately to question the validity of orthodox Christianity altogether After abandoning his religious calling, aided by his devoted sister, Henriette, he gave himself up to literary work, especially on the origins of Christianity His most characteristic book was the *Life of Jesus* (1863) He deeply influenced Arnold, and has been called his 'contemporary, analogue, friend and master'

p 4, l 8 Goethe Johann Wolfgang Goethe was born at Frankfurt in 1749 In 1771 appeared his first great drama

*Götz von Berlichingen*, which spread like wildfire over Germany 1784-5 saw the completion of the passionate romance, *Werter*, which "opened the pent-up gates of sentimentalism", it wrung the hearts of men and women with imaginary sorrows floods of tears were shed over it Young men dressed up in blue coats and yellow breeches shot themselves with *Werter* in their hands" Goethe was now living at Weimar, his historic home, in which he settled down after his Italian journey In 1792-4, he saw fighting against the French, but Jena (1806) left him little affected, for he was fascinated by Napoleon, whom he met on the latter's entry into Weimar In 1787 began his historic friendship with Schiller, and *Wilhelm Meister* was commenced In 1808 came the first part of *Faust*, the most sublime of all his creations In 1811 the War of Liberation broke out, 1812-15, appeared *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (Poetry and Truth), 1814, the *West-Eastern Divan*, 1820, the *Wanderjahre*, and second part of *Faust* In 1832, Goethe died Poet, dramatist, critic, he was the embodiment of the new world of to-day, as Homer was of Greece, Dante of the Middle Ages, and Shakespeare of the Renaissance "He was the incarnate spirit of the nineteenth century, the prophet of a new age not yet born" His influence upon English thought begins with Carlyle, the interpreter of Germany to England Arnold, with whom he had much in common, was profoundly affected by him. Cf his *Memorial Verses* —

Physician of the Iron Age,  
 Goethe has done his pilgrimage  
 He took the suffering human race,  
 He read each wound, each weakness clear,  
 And struck his finger on the place,  
 And said—the wound is here, and here —  
 He looked on Europe's dying hour  
 Of fitful dream and feverish power,  
 His eye plunged down the weltering strife,  
 The turmoil of expiring life,  
 He said—The end is everywhere  
 Art still has truth, take refuge there

p 5, l 1 upper class The "Philistines" and "Barbarians" of *Culture and Anarchy*, *Friendship's Garland*, etc.

p 5, l 31 foreigners Until recent years, only Shakespeare and Byron among English poets had a continental reputation Even to Taine, the Elizabethans were brilliant barbarians, and Milton and Tennyson provincial

p 6, l 6 Corneille (See Note, p 8 below)

p 6, l 7 Victor Hugo One of the greatest of the French writers of the middle part of the nineteenth century, equally famous as poet (*Les Châtiments*, 1853, *Les Contemplations*, 1856, *La Légende des Siècles*, 1859), dramatist (*Hernani*, 1830) and novelist (*Notre-Dame*, *Les Misérables*, *les Travailleurs de la Mer*) He moved Swinburne's passionate admiration, but left Arnold cold Tennyson calls him

Victor in Drama, Victor in Romance,  
Cloud-weaver of phantasmal hopes and fears,  
French of the French and Lord of human tears

p 7, l 6 Amphictyonic Here apparently used in the sense of "international" The Amphictyonic League of Ancient Greece was a kind of international council for the protection of the shrine of Delphi It was prostituted for political purposes by Thebes (Sacred War, 355-346 B C) for revenge against Phocis, which gave Philip of Macedon an excuse for interfering and ultimately destroying Greek liberty

p 8, l 14 A few notes on the galaxy of authors here mentioned must suffice Corneille (1606-84), Molière (1622-73), Racine (1639-99), were the greatest names in French seventeenth century "classical" drama Boileau (1636-1711) was a literary critic (*Le Lutrin*), poet and satirist, who was to a great extent the model followed by Pope and the English poets of the "Augustan" period Voltaire (François Marie Arouet, 1694-1791) dramatist, historian, critic and encyclopedist, led the movement against the tyranny of Church and State in France, and lived for many years in exile at Ferney in Switzerland André Chénier, lyric poet, "half Greek by blood and wholly by sentiment," was guillotined in 1794 Béranger (1780-1857), "grand chansonnier de France," was often in prison for his patriotic and anti-Royalist lyrics Lamartine (1790-1869) wrote *Méditations poétiques*, described as "La poésie toute

pure" De Musset (1810-1857), essentially the poet of Paris and modern France, the antithesis of Hugo

Of the German poets, Klopstock (1724-1803) is chiefly celebrated for his *Messiah*, and Lessing (1729-81) for *Minna von Barnhelm*, *Nathan the Wise*, and *Laocoon*, the latter being a classical essay on Aesthetics Klopstock, Lessing, and Wieland founded the classical school of German literature Schiller (1759-1805), friend and rival of Goethe, is noted chiefly for his historical dramas, *Wallenstein*, *Wilhelm Tell*, etc. Uhland (1787-1862) was the founder of the "Swabian" school Rückert (1789-1866) celebrated the war of the Liberation Heine (*Buch der Lieder*) is best studied in Arnold's beautiful essay

Of the Italian poets, Filicaja was a lyrical poet of the seventeenth century who celebrated the siege of Vienna by the Turks Alfieri, patriotic, classical and revolutionary, led the revolt against the insipid Arcadian school of poetry, with Foscolo and Monti Manzoni, religious and mystic, was the author of the great historical romance *Promessi Sposi* His contemporary Leopardi has been described as "the poet of Nature and Despair, more poignant than Byron or Shelley"

p 13 l 11 Homer Arnold's *Lectures on Translating Homer*, 1861

p 15 l 23 Omar

And this I know whether the one True Light  
Kindle to Love, or Wrath consume me quite,  
One flash of It, within the Tavern caught  
Better than in the Temple lost outright!

Thanks to Fitzgerald, Omar is better known and appreciated in England than in his own country He was born at Naishapur in Khorassan, at the end of the eleventh century, A C

p 16 l 4 Epictetus

That halting slave, who in Nicopolis  
Taught Arrian, when Vespasian's brutal son  
Cleared Rome of what most shamed him

p 17 l 2 Gautier (1811-72) Romantic and eccentric, he "writes pictures," as the French say. He paved the

way for the *Satanisme* of Baudelaire's *Fleurs du Mal* *Enaux et Camées* (1852) and *Mlle de Maupin* (1835) are his most characteristic works in verse and prose

p 18 l 4 Quique, etc " Holy bards, whose utterances were worthy of Phoebus " Vergil, *Aen* vi 662

p 20 l 27 Thucydides (471-396 B C) The historian of the Peloponnesian war

## F W MYERS MARCUS AURELIUS

Frederick William Myers (1843-1901) was, like Matthew Arnold, an Inspector of Schools His earliest work was a striking poem, *St Paul* (1867) His *Essays, Classical and Modern* (1883) showed him to be a writer with a singular gift of style and great critical insight His only other purely literary work was the volume on Wordsworth contributed to the *English Men of Letters* His writings, particularly the noble essays on the Greek Oracles and Virgil, showed pronounced mystical tendencies, and he devoted most of his later life to the Society of Psychical Research, of which he was one of the founders in 1882 His last book was an exhaustive volume on the survival of Human Personality

Marcus Aurelius Antoninus shares with Julian the honour of being among the saintliest products of paganism, and one of the noblest rulers who ever wore the purple He was an almost literal fulfilment of the Platonic ideal of the ' philosopher-king ' He was born of a noble family in A D 121, and educated by tutors, of whom M Cornelius Fronto became a devoted friend and guide From Diognetus he imbibed the Stoic doctrines which moulded his life His uncle, Titus Antoninus Pius (138-161), had adopted both Marcus and Commodus, but designated the former only as his successor Marcus Aurelius, however, insisted on sharing the dignity with his foster-brother On his succession he began at once to put his doctrines into practice He slaved night and day in purifying public and private life and in reforms of every kind But he was not left long in peace Rome was threatened on all sides The Parthians in

Armenia, and the German tribes on the Danube, were assuming a threatening attitude. Marcus had to take the field, and spent the rest of his life in ceaseless campaigns against the barbarian hordes until his death in 180. With his demise came to a close the age of the Antonines, which Gibbon considers "the period during which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous." But it was an autumn summer only. Commodus, buffoon, tyrant and libertine, soon undid his father's work. The most lasting heritage which Marcus Aurelius bequeathed to the world was his *Meditations*, reflections jotted down at odd moments of leisure, and forming one of the noblest collection of precepts in all literature. It has been not unjustly compared with the Sermon on the Mount, or the teaching of Gautama, the founder of Buddhism. It is one of the most melancholy paradoxes of history that one whose beliefs were so akin to Christianity should have sanctioned the butchery of the Christians in 177. But Marcus Aurelius had no opportunity of forming any kind of acquaintance with Christianity as a religion. To the Romans of his time, the Christian religion was, in the words of Tacitus, an 'exécrable superstition,' an obscure Jewish sect, composed of immoral fanatics who encouraged disloyalty by forbidding their followers to conform with the State religion. The student should read Matthew Arnold's defence of the attitude of the Emperor towards the Christians in his essay on Marcus Aurelius, indeed, the whole essay, which is complementary to that of Myers, abundantly repays study.

Stoicism was the name given to a school of philosophy founded by Zeno about 304 B.C. It was successively built up by Cleanthes and Chrysippus. Stoicism is essentially a practical creed—a religion or rule of life, rather than a mere philosophical theory. It aims at knowledge, but knowledge which can be realized in virtuous action. God is to the world what soul is to man, an informing spirit. Right action is "life according to Nature," doing our duty, fulfilling the end for which we are created. The only Good is Knowledge or Virtue, the only Evil is Ignorance or Vice. the other accidents of this mortal life, disease, poverty, even death, are "indifferent." It will easily be



seen that Stoicism made an appeal to the Roman mind, which was essentially practical and severe, and laid especial stress on conduct. Besides, Stoicism, unlike the earlier Greek systems, was cosmopolitan and suited to the Roman Empire, with its various nationalities, and in this respect it anticipated the appeal of Christianity. All might be members of the "dear city of Zeus." Stoicism came to Rome with Panaetius (185 B.C.), and it found a congenial soil in the hearts of the stern republicans who struggled against the tyranny and corruption of the early Emperors. Cato the Younger's suicide at Utica set the example for Paetus and Helvidius Priscus, and even the gentle Seneca and the timid Lucan, to follow unflinchingly. In Epictetus, a lame slave banished by Domitian, Stoicism found one of its most admirable exponents, in Marcus Aurelius it reached the summit of practical morality. After him it died out, perhaps because the universal degeneration of the Roman character made it no longer acceptable.

p 29 "Αγὼν ὑπὲρ ἡγοῦν For translation, see p 53 Cleanthes (c. 300 B.C.) the second founder of Stoicism, was the author of a magnificent *Hymn to Zeus*, which seems to have inspired many of the loftiest thoughts of Wordsworth's *Ode to Duty*. The doctrine that we must follow like men the path marked out for us by "Zeus and Destiny," is a familiar one in Stoicism. Compare the noble exhortation to "depart contentedly," which closes the *Meditations*.

l 8 living historians Farrar's *Seekers after God* (1868) contains an admirable estimate of Marcus Aurelius. Ernest Renan's *Marc Aurèle et la fin du monde antique* appeared in 1882.

p 31, l 31 optimates Cf "senatorial order," p 37, l 19ff

p 34, l 3 Faustina, daughter of Commodus the Elder, married Marcus about 146. She bore him eleven children and died in 175. The scandalous stories about her emanate from Dion Cassius, and are probably untrue.

l 11 Avidius Cassius, commander-in-chief of the Roman forces operating against the Parthians in Asia Minor, was proclaimed Emperor by the soldiery in 175, some

say at the instigation of Faustina Three months after he was assassinated and his head brought to Marcus Marcus characteristically refused to punish any one else for the revolt, and burnt the incriminating correspondence of Cassius unread

l 30 *couches*, *lectisternium*, an ancient ceremony revived after great national calamities, *eg* during the second Punic War

p 35, l 5 Janus The temple of Janus, open in times of war, was said only to have been closed three times in the history of Rome in the reign of Numa, in 234 B C, and under Augustus in the year of the birth of Jesus Christ

l 5 *Terminus*, the god of boundaries, representing the limits of the Roman Empire

l 10 *Vulcatius* A historian of the reign of Diocletian Only a few fragments of his work, including an account of the revolt of Avidius Cassius, remain

l 24 *daemon* The doctrine of the *δαίμων* or Guardian Angel (sometimes identified with the Conscience), is as old as Socrates It was made a prominent feature of the teaching of Epictetus To him it is the "divine part" in man, Conscience or Reason Cf Menander's saying,

*ἀπαντι δαίμων ἀνδρὶ συμπαραστατεῖ  
εὐθὺς γενομένῳ, μυστάγωγος εἰς βίον*

"A daemon stands by each man's side at birth, To guide him through the mystery of Life"

p 36 l 18 *Verus* Commander before Avidius Cassius In 165 the Parthians were defeated and a triumph was celebrated, but the returning soldiers brought the plague in their train to Italy

l 32 *Marcellus*, the young son of Marcellus and Octavia, sister of Augustus, died at the age of eighteen, amidst universal mourning In his honour Vergil penned the lovely lines at the end of the sixth *Aeneid*, at the recitation of which the Emperor broke down,—

Give, give me lilies thick the flowers be laid  
To greet this mighty, melancholy shade  
With such poor gifts let me his praise maintain,  
And mourn with useless tears and crown in vain

p 37, l 11 lent, "*ostendunt terris hunc tantum fata*" *Aen.*  
vi 870

p 39, l 18 Renan *Marc Aurèle et la fin du monde antique* "A really permanent Gospel, the *Meditations* will never die out, for it affirms no dogma The Christian Gospel has become obsolete in some respects science no longer allows us to accept the naive conception of the supernatural on which it is founded In the *Meditations*, the supernatural is only an insignificant blemish, which does not affect the marvellous beauty underlying it Science might destroy the belief in God and the Soul, but the *Meditations* would still remain youthful in life and truth The religion of Marcus Aurelius, as was at times that of Jesus, is absolute Religion, that which results from the simple fact of a high moral conscience placed face to face with the Universe It is not of one country or one race No revolution, no progress, no discovery will have any power to alter it"

p 40, l 17 Varro, antiquarian and author of *De Re Rustica* and *De Lingua Latina*, 116-28 B C

p 26 Lares, from the Etruscan *Lars*, a leader, were, like the Manes or spirits of the dead, household godlings, who protected the home

l 30 *Indigitamenta* See the author's Essay on Vergil, *Classical Essays*, p 156

p 41, l 31, n See the passage referred to in the last note, and *Ency Brit* (11) xiii 69 "The *Kami* of Japan have their counterparts in the lists of ancient Rome The child was reared under the superintendence of Educa and Potina Abeona and Adcona taught him to go out and in," etc

p 42, l 8 Curhus, 360 B C, leapt into the gulf in the Forum Scaevola held his right hand in the flames and thereby convinced Lars Porsenna of the futility of trying to conquer Rome Horatius "kept the bridge, in the brave days of old" against Tarquin Regulus, the Roman general, taken prisoner by the Carthaginians and sent to plead for peace, urged his countrymen to war and then surrendered himself to the enemy, who tortured him

to death, 251 B C Cato the elder was the model of the old Roman virtues As Censor he opposed the introduction of Greek philosophy into Rome He was a bitter enemy of Carthage, and dinned into the Senate the maxim "Carthage must be destroyed" He wrote a *De Re Rustica*, referred to by Marcus Aurelius, p 32, ante His grandson, Cato of Utica, committed suicide in Stoic fashion after the defeat of Scipio at Thapsacus, 46 B C

l 9 heaven descended "E coelo descendit γινῶθι σεαυτόν" Γινῶθι σεαυτόν, "Know thyself," was the motto on the temple at Delphi, adopted by Socrates as his rule of life

p 43, l 15 Pythagoras, a Greek philosopher of the sixth century B C, who founded a celebrated sect at Croton in Magna Graecia His doctrines, largely esoteric, were of an "Orphic" character, and included the transmigration of the soul In this and in his prohibition of flesh-eating among his disciples, some people see a reflection of Indian teaching

l 20 Punic wars Panaetius of Rhodes, 185 B C, first taught Stoicism in Rome, and had among his pupils, Laelius, Scipio, and other leading men See Introduction to this Essay

l 23 allegorising Olympus Zeno found "natural principles," λόγοι φυσικοί, in the myths of Homer and Hesiod Ulysses and Hercules were favourite Stoic heroes The "rationalizing" of myths is called Euhemerism, from its author Euhemerus

l 25 Brutus fell on his sword after Philippi, 42 B C

l 27 Porch The Στόα Ποικιλή at Athens where Zeno taught

l 31 support It has been pointed out in the introduction that Stoicism inspired the aristocratic republican opposition to the Caesars from the time of Cato to Brutus Under Nero the persecution of these republicans was especially bitter, and Seneca, Petronius, Lucan, Piso, Paetus, and a host of other distinguished Romans availed themselves of the "way out" of suicide, recommended by Stoicism in order to avoid dishonour

p 44, l 32 Antinous, a beautiful Bithynian youth

beloved of Hadrian, drowned in the Nile, A D 130 He was afterwards deified and towns were named after him Bithynium, *e g*, became Antinoopolis Idealized busts and statues of him are common in the Vatican, Lateran, Louvre and other collections

p 57, l 32 **Apuleius** The author of the celebrated romance, the *Golden Ass*

p 58, l 4 **Mithra**, the Persian Sun-God (*Sol deo invicto Mithrae* is common on his altars), introduced by the soldiers into Rome, became popular under Elagabalus (a Syrian by birth) A D 218 His cult was a formidable rival to Christianity

**Serapis** introduced from Egypt by Antoninus Pius, A D 146

l 26 **Alexander of Abonoteichos**, a Galatian miracle-monger who was a friend of Marcus Aurelius **Apollonius of Tyana**, a much more famous teacher of the same type He is said to have seen by clairvoyance in Ephesus, the assassination of Domitian in Rome He was a serious rival of Christianity, claiming to work miracles similar to those of Jesus Christ, of whom he was a contemporary He called himself a Pythagorean

l 29 **Justin Martyr**, a Christian apologist of Egypt (c A D 150)

**Minucius Felix**, author of *Octavius*, an apologetic work, written in Africa, c A D 207

p 61, l 3 **Thundering Legion**. In 174, a Roman army was cut off, without water, in a defile by the Quadi A sudden thunderstorm enabled them to quench their thirst and also surprise the enemy Christian writers attribute this miraculous deliverance to the prayers of Christian soldiers in a certain legion henceforth known as the "Thundering," *κεραυνοβόλος* It is probable, however, that they were really so-called from the device of a thunderbolt upon their shields, and not for any connection with the occurrence

l 13 **St. Paul's speech**, *Acts xvii 22 ff*

p 63, l 2 **Pothemus and Blandina** Martyrs in the persecution of Lyons There were two great persecutions of the Christians under Marcus Aurelius, at Lyons and also at Smyrna, where Polycarp suffered

p 66, l 1 " As for us, if anyone came to us with a decisive argument of this kind, we should imitate St Louis when some one told him about the miraculous Host — we should refuse to go and see it ! What need have we of these brutal proofs, which are without relevance except in the gross region of fact, and which would only impair our liberty of thought ? "

p 68, l 14 Doch alles, etc —

Yet all that urged me unto this  
God ! was so good, oh, was so sweet

(Margaret in *Faust*, pt 1 l 3240, speaking of her fall )

## WALTER PATER LEONARDO DA VINCI

Walter Pater (1839-94) was educated at Queen's College, Oxford, where he came under the influence of T H Green and Jowett. He became a Fellow of Brasenose, and spent most of his life in Oxford and London. His career is, except for his writings, uneventful. In 1866, his article on Coleridge arrested attention by the singular brilliance of its style. Other articles, on Leonardo da Vinci, Boticelli, and kindred subjects, were collected into a single volume, *The Renaissance*, 1873. The beauty of his work at once attracted a select circle of readers, but his theories, especially his gospel of Art for Art's sake, were condemned as vicious by the Victorian critics, who scented immorality in him as in Swinburne. The frank paganism of his views shocked others, and there is no doubt that his followers exaggerated his tenets into something which was actually morbid and decadent. Pater was deterred by the reception which his first book received from publishing anything more for some time. *Marius the Epicurean*, his finest work, did not come out till 1885, *Imaginary Portraits* followed in 1887, *Appreciations*, 1889, *Miscellaneous Studies*, 1895.

Leonardo da Vinci was born in Florentine territory in 1452. The Renaissance movement, destined to revolutionize art and literature throughout Europe, and to shake religion to its foundations, was now gathering strength

It was not that civilization was dead during the Middle Ages, at any rate in Italy, but the Catholic Church and Feudalism between them held men's souls and bodies in an iron grip. The coming of the new era is heralded by Dante's *Divine Comedy* (1300), by Petrarch (1304-74) and his contemporary, Boccaccio. Italy, too, provided an essentially freer political atmosphere. The Papacy, with all its faults, was cosmopolitan, and instead of the centralized rule of France, England or Spain, there arose a number of city-states, Florence, Genoa, Naples, Milan, Venice, Rome, and others, independent and to some extent democratic. These, like the city-states of old Greece, afforded an ideal environment for art, and were munificent patrons of artists. In Florence, especially, the family of the Medici, of whom the greatest was Lorenzo the Magnificent, were notable patrons of the arts. Leonardo received his artistic education from Andrea Verrochio, a celebrated craftsman who took a number of pupils or apprentices. The pupil soon beat the master, and attracted Lorenzo's attention. Between 1480 and 1484 he apparently travelled in Mahommedan countries, and in 1487 he took service under Duke Ludovico il Moro of Milan. For him Leonardo designed fortresses and military engines, pageants and other shows, and executed two great works, the equestrian statue of the Duke's father, Francesco Sforza, and the wonderful painting of the Last Supper on the walls of the convent of Santa Maria della Grazie. This ranks, with the Sistine Madonna and the Last Judgement, as the greatest painting in the world. About 1505 followed the Mona Lisa, an almost equally famous masterpiece, whose enigmatic smile has fascinated generations of men. In 1515 he returned with Francis I to France and died there. He has well been named the Faust of the Italian Renaissance. His fertile brain was for ever busy with all manner of strange problems, ranging from new *media* for painting, to optics, and devices for flying. He loved to manufacture curious mechanical toys, to study dissection, to devise tools and machines of all kinds. In art, he had a passion for rare plants and curious animals, strangely shaped hulls, the far-fetched, enigmatic or grotesque. His many-sided genius is as baffling as it is fascinating and picturesque.

p 73, l 2 **Battle of the Standard.** Cf p 97 This was the battle of Anghiari on the lower Tiber, 1440, where the Florentines under Francesco Sforza defeated Niccolò Picciunno, the general of the Visconti

l 3 **meaner hands** The original painting has almost disappeared owing to time and damp, and has been re-touched many times by restorers

l 19 **Vasari** (1513-74) the pupil of Michelangelo and Andrea del Sarto, patronized by the Medicis, is only known to fame by his gossiping but invaluable *Delle Vite de' più Eccellenti Pittori, Scultori ed Architettori* (1550-68)

l 20 **Amoretti** *Memorie Storiche sulla vita etc di Leonardo da Vinci*, Milan, 1804.

p 74, l 23 **Andrea del Verrocchio**, 1453-88, a famous craftsman and teacher His greatest work is the equestrian statue of Bartolomeo Colleoni at Venice, which ranks beside that of Marcus Aurelius at Rome

l 32 **Perugino** (1446-1524) An artist of the Umbrian school

p 77, l 25 **San Giovanni**, the *bel San Giovanni* of Dante, the baptistery of St John, designed by Arnolfo di Cambio (see below) Leonardo wanted to lift it from its foundations and replace it on a marble base

p 79, l 24 **treatise on painting** This celebrated work consisted of a number of brief notes, critical or didactic, on the art and practice of painting It was published in Paris in 1551, and an English translation has appeared

p 80, l 12 **Paracelsus** (1490-1541), alchemist, philosopher and physician, was one of the most celebrated figures of his day He created an immense stir by his empiric methods, disregarding all the *a priori* rules of the doctors Cardan of Pavia (1501-76) was an astrologer, mathematician, and physician of a similar type

l 27 **Raphael** Raffaello Santi of Urbino (1483-1520) was the third of the three famous contemporaries, Leonardo, Michelangelo, Raphael His greatest picture, one of the greatest in the world, is the Sistine Madonna, he also painted many noble frescoes for the Vatican



p 81, l 25 **Duomo** (Santa Maria del Fiore), was built on the plans of Arnolfo di Cambio (1298), who also designed the Baptistery The reference is probably to the modern façade, which is the work of de Fabrio

l 27 **Giotto** (1276-1336), the pupil of Cimabue, the father of Italian painting, designed the Campanile at Florence He was a friend of Dante, and painted the portrait described so well by Carlyle He was the painter of the frescoes in the Franciscan church at Assisi

p 83, l 8 **Clement, Raphael, Leonardo de Vinci et Michel-ange**, Paris, 1879

p 84, l 17 **Feronière**, a jewel worn on the forehead, suspended by a gold chain or band, as in the well-known picture of Beatrice d'Este

p 85 (footnote) "The more a work of art bears upon it the impress of manual effort, the more valueless it is"  
*Ars est celare artem*

p 92, l 17 **French**. The French invasions of Italy began with Charles VIII, 1483 In 1498, Louis XII attacked Milan his cousin, Francis I, repeating the exploit in 1515, won a great battle at Marignano, but ten years later he was routed and captured at Pavia

p 94, l 4 **Savonarola** (1452-1498), a Dominican monk who preached against the frivolity and corruption of Italian society in Florence He had at one time a great following, but he made powerful enemies in Church and State, and was cruelly executed as a heretic and traitor, though he was in reality a reformer only, attacking not the doctrines but the morals of the Church (See George Eliot's *Romola*)

l 16 **La Gioconda** is, if not the greatest, the most characteristic of Leonardo's works The model was Lisa di Antonio Maria di Noldo Gheradina, wife of Zanobi del Gioconda, commonly called Mona (Madonna) Lisa It was bought for 4,000 livres by Francis I, and hangs in the Louvre In Mona Lisa, with her haunting, enigmatic smile, Leonardo at last found his ideal subject, and he spent four years over the work, causing music to be played that the sitter might not lose her rapt expression The colouring of the painting has, alas, much faded

## J R GREEN THE FLORENCE OF DANTE

J R Green (1837-83) was educated at Jesus College, Oxford. He started life as a clergyman in the East End, and there he gained experience of the life of the poor, as valuable to the historian of the English people as Gibbon's service in the militia was to the chronicler of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. He was forced by ill-health to give up clerical work, and began contributing to the *Saturday Review* on historical subjects. He became acquainted with Freeman and Stubbs, and in 1869 he was made librarian at Lambeth. He was compelled to spend most of his winters abroad, but he struggled with feverish energy at his work, and in 1874 he published his *Short History of the English People*. This was a new departure in historical method, it was an account, not of kings and conquests, courts and diplomacies, but of constitutional, intellectual and social advance. Green woke up to find himself famous, and the *History* was a success only to be compared to those of Macaulay and Gibbon. The work was expanded into four volumes in 1878-80, the *Making of England* and the *Conquest of England*, the latter unfinished, were his chief other contributions. In 1876 he published a selection of his occasional papers under the title of *Stray Studies from England and Italy*, and from these the essay here given is selected.

Florence in the time of Dante. Something has already been said in the previous essay about the city-states of medieval Italy. In many ways we have to go back to ancient Greece for a suitable political parallel to them. One feature which they have in common was the fierce spirit of faction which filled them with bloody internecine feuds. The rival parties were usually the Guelfs or Papal faction, more or less identified with the popular party, the *arti*, and the Ghibellines or Imperial party, composed largely of the nobles, the *grandi* or *delli torri*. Down to the beginning of the thirteenth century, Florence, attached to the Guelfs, was at peace. But in 1215, the dramatic quarrel described on page 107, broke out between the Buondelmonte and the Uberti. The Buondelmonte declared for

the Guelfs, and the Uberti for the Ghibellines. Then began a long and weary civil war, one incident of which was the defeat, in 1289, of the army of the Ghibelline city of Arezzo at Campaldino by the Florentines. In this battle the poet Dante (1265-1321) took part. Dante was admitted to one of the Guilds in 1295, and in 1300 was elected as one of the Priori or chief magistrates. At this time the leading factions in Florence were the Neri, headed by Corso Donati, who were more or less identified with the Guelfs, and the Bianchi, headed by Vieri dei Cerchi, who stood for the Ghibellines. Dante and his colleagues tried to secure peace for their distracted city by banishing the heads of both factions. Corso Donati appealed to the Pope, who in his turn appealed to the French. Dante, who went to Rome to get this altered, never entered his beloved city again. He was sentenced to banishment with a threat that he would be burnt alive if he returned. Dante vainly hoped that Henry of Luxemburg, who became Emperor in 1308, would restore peace and unity in Italy, but he died in 1313. The great poet himself expired in 1321. Everyone knows the story of his romantic love for Beatrice de' Portinari, which is related in his *Vita Nuova*, and how, after her death in 1290, she inspired the *Divine Comedy*.

p 100, l 12 **Guido Cavalcanti**, a contemporary of Dante and founder of the Tuscan school of Lyric Poetry

l 15 **Malaspina**. Ricordano Malespini's *Cronaca*, which was considered the most ancient prose work in Italian, is now regarded as a forgery. Dino Compagni (end of thirteenth century) wrote a chronicle of events from 1280-1312. He is an excellent historian, notwithstanding some inaccuracies, and seeks for the underlying causes of the events he describes.

p 101, l 3 **Hapsburgs**. Rudolf of Hapsburg (1273-91) was the founder of the house which held the Imperial sceptre for centuries, and ruled till the other day in Austria. St Louis (IX) (1226-70) developed the central power of the French monarchy at the expense of the great feudal nobility. Philip III (1270-85) further increased the domains of the French monarchs, and his government was the strongest and most prosperous on the continent at the time

1 21 **troubadours** In the twelfth century, when Italy had no literature and scarcely a language, many Italians actually wrote Provençal poems. From this it was a step to the "Siculo-provençal" school of which Frederick II was head, which dealt with the themes of chivalry and love in the manner of the Troubadours.

1 29 **City of the Lily.** *La città dei fiori*. The crest (see p. 103) was a red lily on a white ground.

p. 102, 1 2 **Boccaccio** (1313-75), author of the *Decameron*, a collection of one hundred tales told by members of a party which had fled to a country villa to escape the plague in Florence in 1348. Together with Petrarch, he was at once an admirer of Latin and a lover of the new Italian literature; he is a pioneer, but not great as a poet.

1 15 **Villani**, a Florentine historian who continues the story of Dino down to 1347. It was still further continued by his brothers.

1 27 **Froissart** (1337-1410), the author of the famous French *Chronicle*, which gives the most perfect of all pictures of the chivalry of the Middle Ages.

p. 110, 1 5 **Boniface VIII** (1294-1303) extended Innocent III's idea of the lordship of the Papacy over the whole world, until he provoked a universal rebellion against his pretensions, led by Philip IV of France.

1 15 **Barbarossa**. Frederick Barbarossa (1152-1190) was the greatest of the Emperors since Charlemagne. He at once plunged into the great conflict of the Empire against the Papacy, which had been provoked by the arrogant pretensions of the latter to the spiritual and temporal supremacy of the Church. He invaded Italy, but the Italian city-states were on the side of the Pope against the foreign intruder. Frederick was beaten at Legnano, outside Milan (1177), and had to humble himself as Henry IV had done at Canossa a century before. But he regained his prestige by an epoch-making marriage between his son (Henry VI) and Constance of Sicily. The child of this marriage was the Emperor Frederick II, the bitterest and most successful enemy of the Papacy, who fought out the great conflict with Innocent III.

1 16 peace of Constance, 1183, recognized the independence of the Italian city-states, and for a time freed Italy from Imperial interference. The communes of Lombardy were confirmed in their right of self-government by consuls and their right of private warfare. These privileges extended to Tuscany.

## J A FROUDE WORDS ABOUT OXFORD

James Anthony Froude was born at Totnes in Devonshire in 1818. His father was a country parson of the old type, a scholar, sportsman, and sound Protestant. Froude was educated at Oriel College, Oxford, won the Chancellor's Medal, and took a Fellowship at Exeter College in 1842. He was for a time fascinated by Newman, and took a part in the Tractarian Movement, which was shaking the University to its foundations. But by 1847 this religious fervour gave way to an almost complete scepticism, and his two books, *Shadows in the Clouds*, and the *Nemesis of Faith*, brought down a storm of indignation upon his head. Religious bigotry then reigned supreme at the Universities, and the Catholicism of Newman and the agnosticism of Froude received equally brutal treatment. Froude was driven out of Oxford, and lost, also, a valuable Colonial appointment. But he found a true friend in Charles Kingsley, a fellow-Devonian, whose sister-in-law he married. He was a regular contributor to the *Westminster* and *Frazer's*, and in 1860 became Editor of the latter. To these magazines he contributed many of the essays afterwards republished in his *Short Studies on Great Subjects*. In 1856 appeared his *History of England from the Fall of Wolsey to the Defeat of the Spanish Armada*. All Froude's historical work was dominated by two motives, the exaltation of the Hero or Strong Man, and dislike of Catholicism. In both respects he was strongly influenced by Carlyle. In 1868 he was elected Rector of St Andrews' University. Colonial questions greatly interested him, and occupied most of his time from 1874 to 1888. In 1881-3, he published Carlyle's *Reminiscences*, a work which excited bitter controversy. In 1892, on the death of Freeman, Oxford made

a tardy reparation to one of the greatest of her sons by electing him to the Regius Professorship of History Here he produced his *Eiasmus, Lectures on the Council of Trent*, and *English Seamen of the Sixteenth Century*, the last being published after his death in 1894 "The most notable characteristic of his style," it has been said, "is its graceful simplicity It is never affected or laboured, his sentences are short and easy, and follow one another naturally He is always lucid"

p 114, l 1 **Quevedo** (1580-1645), the great Spanish satirist

p 115, l 8 **Layard** (1817-94) made himself famous by the excavation of the ancient cities of Nineveh and Babylon Nineveh was the capital of Assyria until it was sacked by the Medes (606 B C) when Babylon rose to power under Nebuchadnezzar

p 120, l 5 **Alfred** The connection between Alfred and University College is legendary It was founded by William of Durham, c 1249

l 8 **William of Wykeham**, founder of Winchester College, founded New College in 1380

p 122, l 29 **Magdalen** (1456) has been described as "the most beautiful and complete in plan of all the Colleges The extensive water-walks in the Cherwell meadows, the deer-park, the cloisters with their ivy-grown walls and quaint emblematic sculptures, the rich new buildings of pure Gothic, and above all the tower, combine in this conspicuous result"

p 123, l 5 **Mighty Tom**, in Tom Tower at Christchurch, has from immemorial times sounded 101 strokes at 9 5 P M as a signal for closing the college-gates

l 6 **Walter de Mapes**, statesman, cleric and wit, became Archdeacon of Oxford in 1196

p 124, l 24 **North Wales**, where Froude settled after his marriage in 1853

p 126, l 23 **Sir Egerton Brydges** (1762-1837), a literary man of some note in his day, but now forgotten He edited Collins' *Peerage*, and wrote memoirs and an autobiography

p 129, l 8 Pericles, the great Athenian statesman of the fifth century, B C., is the hero of Thucydides' *History*  
Augustus, the first Roman Emperor, was the patron of Horace and Vergil

l 9 Meonides, Homer

Blind Thamyras and blind Meonides  
And Tiresias and Phineus, prophets old

Milton, *P L* III 35

l 12 Bandusia

O fons Bandusiae, splendidior vitro

"Bandusia's fount in clearness crystalline"

Horace, *Odes*, III 13

## R. L. STEVENSON ESSAYS

Robert Louis Stevenson was born in 1850, of a family of lighthouse-builders and engineers, and educated to follow the profession of his fathers, at Edinburgh University. Bad health forced him to try the law instead, but he found the subject little to his taste, and in 1875 he definitely decided to make his living by his pen. He published *An Inland Voyage* in 1878, and its companion volume, *Travels with a Donkey*, in the following year. The strongly individualistic style of these books attracted the attention of critics, and Stevenson made the acquaintance of Leslie Stephen, Sidney Colvin, and W. E. Henley and other literary men. But the struggle was a hard one, and complicated by the development of serious lung-trouble, which forced him to live abroad for the winter. He took a heroic journey as an emigrant to California to find Mrs. Osbourne, whom he married, and after this the tide slowly turned. His most brilliant and characteristic volume of essays, *Virginibus Puerisque*, appeared in 1881, *Familiar Studies of Men and Books* appeared in the following year. Then came his first great romance, *Treasure Island*, followed (1886-93) by *Kidnapped*, *Catriona*, and the *Master of Ballantrae*, all magnificent books of adventure, lacking the sentimental interest which is the common feature of the novel. Stevenson has no heroines. In 1887

he started on his last journey from England in vain search of health, and eventually he settled at Apia in Samoa, where, "underneath the starry sky," he found his last resting-place in 1894. It cannot be said that the latest period of his life produced any great literature from his pen, excepting the unfinished romance, *Wier of Hermiston*. *The Island Nights' Entertainments* and *The Ebb-Tide*, however, contain charming local colour. Stevenson's letters, short stories, and his verse (*Underwoods* and the *Child's Garden*) deserve mention, but it is as an Essayist that he will live.

p 132, l 5 **Alexander** When Alexander went to see Diogenes the Cynic, he asked him what boon he should confer on him. "Get out of my sunlight," was the reply.

l 8 **Senate** The incident took place when Rome was sacked by the Gauls after the battle of the Allia, 390 B C.

p 134, l 1 **Emphyteusis** is really a law term, meaning copy-hold. **Stallicide** is rain falling from the eaves of a house.

l 8 **Balzac** (1799-1858) the author of the *Comédie Humaine*, one of the greatest and most characteristic literary productions of post-revolutionary France. It is an extraordinarily realistic picture of contemporary French life in all its lights and shades. "He plumbs the heights and depths of human character."

p 147, l 6 **Gibbon** "It was on the day, or rather night of the 27th June, 1787, between the hours of eleven and twelve, that I wrote the last lines of the last page in a summer-house in my garden. I will not dissemble the first emotions of joy in the recovery of my freedom and perhaps the establishment of my fame. But my pride was soon humbled and a sober melancholy was spread over my mind by the idea that I had taken leave of an old and agreeable companion."

p 151, l 3 **Germanicus** (15 B C - 19 A C), the hero of the earlier books of Tacitus' *Annals*. He was a brilliant young general, and in A D 12 led an expedition to Germany to avenge the defeat of the legions of Varus. His successes aroused the jealousy of Tiberius, and he probably died of poison.



l 6 *lacrymae* "Sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem  
mortalia tangunt" Vergil, *Aen* 1 459

"Tears waken tears, and honour honour brings,  
And mortal hearts are moved by mortal things"

p 157, l 4 *capitis diminutio*, loss of civic rights

p 160, *end* **Henley** (1849-93) poet and critic, and friend  
of Stevenson

